TWILIGHT FAIRY TALES

By

Maud Ballington Booth

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THE · LAKE · OF · PEACE

Twilight Fairy Tales

By (Charlesworth)

MAUD BALLINGTON BOOTH

Author of

"Sleepy-Time Stories"

"Lights of Childland," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

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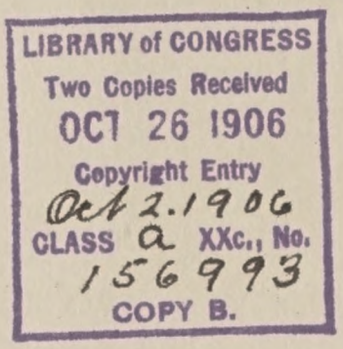

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BY
MAUD BALLINGTON BOOTH

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

MY OWN LITTLE DAUGHTER

MYRTLE THEODORA

THESE STORIES ARE LOVINGLY DEDICATED

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INTRODUCTION

TO my little friends, the children I may never see, but shall always love, I want to write a few words about the stories that I have here jotted down for them, and for my own, little, blue-eyed girl, who begged that this time they might be about fairies.

Fairies! Do I believe in them? Why, of course I do. Take the fairies out of many children's lives, and there would be such an over-weight of lessons and facts, that little eyes would grow dull, and sweet mouths, meant to turn up at the corners in merry smiles, would be pulled down and permanently spoiled.

When people grow up, they are too tall and wise and busy to look for fairies in the grass amid the daisies and strawberry plants; and they think that only snakes and toads live under the moss-covered stones down by the stream. But children know better, and that is

why they have such fun in the woods and love the fields and flowers; and can spend hours playing and frolicking with nothing, as grown-up people think; when those same dull people would not be happy without a book to read or a grown-up companion to talk to.

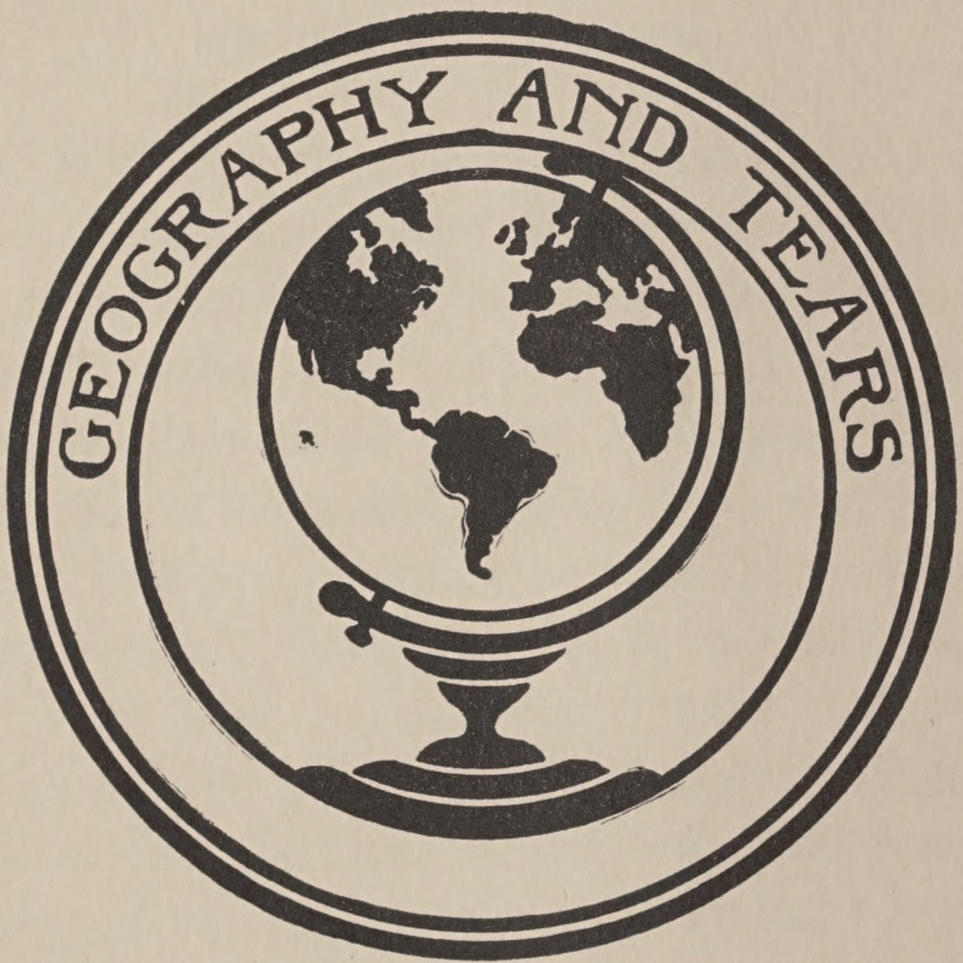
I remember the days when I was not too big to love the fairies and play with them in the sunshine; and I think they have been whispering to me again, and perhaps some little fellow is riding on my pencil as I write, and helping to guide it; though of course I can't see them any more, for I am one of the grown-ups now.

These stories are being written as I travel over the mountains, across wide prairies, through the desert, and off to the wide Pacific coast; back over the Sierra and Cascade Mountains; by the shining snows of Mount Hood, and the mighty, white pile called Mount Rainier; through great, dark valleys, where the train creeps between grey rocks; close to some deep, green river; out onto the Bad Lands; and then in time down past the Great Lakes, and

over the country back to the dear, little home I love so well.

By that time the book must be finished; and if my little daughter says it will do, I will send it out to the dear, little readers all over our great country, who will accept and understand it. I write it for them; not for the grown-ups; and if it cheers them through some rainy days, or brightens hours in the sick room, I shall feel well repaid for the time that I have spent writing down the whispers of my one-time fairy friends.

Maud B. Booth.


GEOGRAPHY AND TEARS

CHAPTER I

GEOGRAPHY AND TEARS

THERE was certainly a fascinating view from the nursery window if one liked wintry scenery. The great dark fir trees and spruce bushes that bordered the lawn were heavily draped in fleecy whiteness. The branches of oaks and maples shone and glittered with icy particles, and the pure white carpet which overspread the lawn itself was like the icing on a wedding-cake. There seemed to be snow enough already, and yet the clouds had just dispatched a hurrying flurry of velvety white couriers to tell of the coming of another storm; and the ever-increasing number of these flakes had caught and held, in absent-minded interest, the big grey eyes of a seven-year-old boy, who at that moment should have had those same bright eyes on his teacher and his mind engrossed

with the geographical description of distant states, instead of viewing the limited little bit of America that could be seen from the window.

"Nearly all the cotton of this kind is now raised on the mainland in southern Georgia and northern Florida, as well as in South Carolina. Much of it is sent to England, to be woven into fine cloth. Much of the Texas cotton is shipped from Galveston. A large part of the other grades of cotton, raised farther inland, is shipped from Savannah." At this point in her reading, Miss Sloane glanced up and caught the far-away look in the grey eyes. She guessed that she had been reading to deaf ears. "What is the chief product of southern Georgia, Roy?" There was no answer. "Roy, what is the chief product?" "Snow." The answer was whispered in an absent tone as Roy slightly changed his position to catch sight of the girations of an extra big flake, that seemed to be dancing a new step of its own amid its earthward drifting companions.

Down went Miss Sloane's book with a bang that made Roy jump, and a gesture of despair brought him suddenly back to the schoolroom, lessons, and a realisation of his own wandering little mind. "Oh! I am sorry, Miss Sloane; I don't quite know what you asked." "Don't quite know, Roy; I should think not. You don't know a word of it. Here I have been reading your lesson to you and doing my best to make it clear, and you have been wool-gathering again." "It was n't wool; it was snow," interposed Roy, with no intention of being impertinent, but with a vague idea that snow was such a pretty, fascinating thing that it might appear a natural temptation and the thought of it mitigate his offence.

"Don't answer me, sir. You are trying enough with your wandering thoughts and carelessness over lessons, without adding to it rudeness as well. I shall keep you in, and as punishment you can write out this whole lesson five times, and I shall tell your father all about it, for I cannot and will not overlook

this repeated inattention, which is most disrespectful as well as dishonourable."

The indignant governess had arisen, and colour was slowly flushing her ordinarily pale cheeks, for as a rule Miss Sloane was not angry to the point of "a row." Roy looked bewildered during the first part of her lecture, for he had hardly come out of his brown study, and had the dazed feeling that he had only just returned to the nursery and the company of his teacher. When she reached the word "dishonourable," however, she touched a tender spot, and the child winced, while tears gathered in the big grey eyes. "I 'm not; I 'm not; I 'm not dishonourable. I did n't mean it. You know I did n't, and I have not lied or cheated or been mean, or what mother would call naughty. You are unkind, and I shall tell mother." "You can tell your mother what you choose, and so shall I. It is dishonourable to waste the hours of teaching for which your parents pay, and to be inattentive when you are supposed to be working. I shall certainly stand no more of this, for it is

a daily occurrence now; and it is time you were made to concentrate your mind on work, instead of living in a foolish dreamland of your own."

Tears were flowing from the big grey eyes as Miss Sloane put on her hat and coat and gathered up her belongings as a sign of departure; and when the door shut with a bang behind her, Roy laid his disconsolate little head on the hated geography book and wailed aloud. He certainly had come back from the land of dreams to a very real land of painful facts. He was in disgrace; he must work on alone, instead of being free on the departure of his teacher to go and play or to dream by the fire until tea-time.

Father and mother were reading in the library together, when Miss Sloane descended upon them, fresh from the scene with Roy, her indignation still ablaze over his listless disregard of study. In an avalanche of words she told of his misdeeds, the careless work, the straying thoughts, the constant drudgery of dinning into his little head, facts for which he

showed not a particle of interest.

Mother promised to help her mend Roy's ways, and father seemed inclined to think the boy's offences were rather natural at his age, which did not soothe Miss Sloane's ruffled spirits. "Well, his manner and unsatisfactory work are very trying to me, Mr. Fordham, and for my part I could put up better with fits of temper or mischief, or even occassional sulkiness; for as it is my time seems to be absolutely thrown away. Roy seems to live in a calm, happy, distant world of dreams, from which I can only rouse him by punishment, and it makes the schoolroom a constant battle-ground." "We will help you, Miss Sloane," said Mr. Fordham reassuringly. "I did not realise Roy had tried you so sorely. The boy has many splendid traits of mind and heart, to which you can appeal, and I think his mother will bring about a change in his work by showing him how much she feels his carelessness."

As Miss Sloane shut the front door and tramped off through the snow, Roy's father

looked over at mother's troubled face, and with raised eyebrows murmured, "Poor little chap." Then, as the logs crackled and the snow-flakes scurried noiselessly about the window, there was a long, earnest, anxious talk about the little son upstairs, who was so dear to them, so sweet and tender and good in many ways, and yet so difficult to harness down to school work and interest in such necessary things as history and geography, grammar and arithmetic, and all the many studies that have to be grasped and remembered by little minds.

Roy Fordham was the baby of the family. His big brothers were at school. His sisters were out of the nursery and schoolroom before he came to crow and laugh in the little blue-ribboned cradle. To all of them he was a baby still, though the golden curls had long since been shorn, and he had already forgotten that he once wore white dresses and played with woolly lambs and other delights of the toddling age. The big boys romped with and teased him, the girls petted; and mother—well

she just loved him and loved him as mothers especially will a baby; and father, busy, happy, jolly father, took him as a sort of joke, never wanted to see him cry, and hardly seemed to remember that he was growing up.

His short life had been a summer dream, until mother realised her baby did not know as much as he ought to, and dear old Mademoiselle, his nurse, governess, and playmate all in one, had given up her place to Miss Sloane, and hours in the schoolroom with books and books and yet more books came into his poor little life. It is hardly right to say " poor little life," for his life ought to have been much the richer for these things; but the trouble was he did n't appreciate the riches of education and the treasures of learning which are so locked up sometimes in hard, dreary facts, that little minds have to work hard to find them.

There were two great, wide, wonderful fields that he loved, and loved intensely, for his was not a careless, lazy little brain, as Miss Sloane seemed to think. It was not quick at storing away the knowledge she had to give,

but that was not because it was empty, but rather from the fact that it was too full of fancies and dreams, very pretty and bright and wonderful, though they could not be found on maps or understood by rules in arithmetic.

The two fields he loved to explore were nature and fairy-land, and somehow they seemed very often to merge into one. In spring and summer, every bud and flower was his treasure, to be sought and loved, watched over and enjoyed. For hours he would waste his time, as Miss Sloane would have put it, watching the birds, laughing over the queer antics of insects, or gazing at the cloud ships that sailed the blue sky, and the mountains and castles of vapour, gilded and glorified by the setting sun.

All this mother rejoiced in at the right time, but now the little colt who had galloped through the daisies and clover and gloried in freedom, had to be harnessed and mentally "broken in." The fact that the harnessing process was so hard and meant so many tears

and so much sorrow was making mother's heart ache too. The dreamy, absent-mindedness of the child was a puzzle to her, until she found how fairy lore had acted on his busy little brain. Perhaps Mademoiselle was somewhat to blame. She loved to tell her *chère bébé* all the tales that French, German, and English wanderers into fairy-land had gathered together for the delight and wonder of the dwellers in child-land. Under the trees in summer, the tales of elves and nymphs, of princes and princesses had mingled with the song of birds and glint of sunshine, until they had become to him inseparable from nature. The merry, gauzy little people who danced in the moonlight, the elves on mischief bent, and the good and bad fairies, who wove spells about the princeling cradles and helped wandering children to the castles hidden in forest labyrinths, were all very real to him, and he was ever waiting, looking, longing, and expecting to have his eyes opened on this enchanted world which he felt was so near and yet hidden from his sight.

The fact that his brothers and sisters were all so much older had left him to play his own games, weave his own fancies, and live in a little world apart from theirs, even in the midst of those who filled his life with comfort and pleasure and love, yet were not children enough to tread the same enchanted paths and weave the same fancies in the firelight.

"Don't worry, mother," said Mr. Fordham reassuringly, "it will all come right; our baby will wake up some day and learn fast enough. He is on the border-land now, spending his time between the land of 'maybe' and the land of 'is,' and I don't wonder the commonplace, work-a-day, lesson-learning world proves dull and stupid to his little mind. Don't forget he comes from story-weaving stock, with a father and grandfather and other illustrious penmen and penwomen flourishing on the family tree. This young bud must naturally develop a vivid imagination and a dream-loving fancy."

Mother dried her tears. She did shed some sometimes when only father was there to see;

and kissing her comforter on the brow, she left the room to go and see how little Roy was bearing his trials in the schoolroom. The short afternoon had closed in. The room was filled with gloomy shadows. The window-seat, however, was still light, for the whiteness outside seemed to hold the lingering daylight and cast it back into the room in a pale ghostly gleam. The distant horizon behind the snow-clad firs and big, bare oaks, showed the coppery tints of the after-glow, while the distant electric lights of the great city, twenty miles away, scintillated, gleamed, and twinkled like a myriad merry eyes.

It was in the window-seat that mother found her darling, a quiet, solemn, woe-begone little heap. So still was he that she thought he had fallen asleep; but on feeling her arms around him, he flung himself impetuously on her knee, and poured out the story of his woes, with all the bitterness and despair of a child's sorrow. He had not meant to be naughty; he really had not. He forgot the lesson; it was so dry,

HE·FLUNG·HIMSELF·ON HER·KNEE·

and as he watched the snow he wondered if each lovely fleeting flake were ridden by a little elf or fairy that he could not see. Then he began to recall the story of the Snow Queen, and wondered if she would come from her glittering icy palace on the white wings of the storm.

When Miss Sloane called him back by her question, he had really not understood, and thought she wanted to know what he was thinking of. Of course he knew it was cotton, not snow, that grew down South, but "Oh! mother," he burst out, "why must I learn about all those stupid things? I just hate lessons. They make my head ache, and then, when I 've learned them, they won 't stay learned. There are so much nicer things to know and think about, and I don't see what good these things will ever be to me. When I grow up I 'll just write books like father, and never bother about the cotton or sugar-cane, the iron in the mountains, or other dull, uninteresting things I 'll never think then

about the wretched sums that won't come right however hard I try to add the senseless figures up."

This outburst gave mother her chance. She tried to show Roy, patiently and lovingly, that father could never have been the man he was, could never have written books and done things if he had not kept his mind on dull lessons when he was a little boy. "But, my darling," she added, "you must really try to keep your thoughts from wandering, for mother's sake, for it grieves her dreadfully to hear such bad reports from Miss Sloane. Father says you live too much in the land of 'maybe,' where you think that there are fairies and elves around us that we cannot see; but he believes with me that our little boy must keep his dreams for play-hours and try to settle down to all the hard, dull facts in the land of 'is.'"

"I don't like the land of 'is', mother. It is full of things on maps and things in books, and numbers and figures, for Miss Sloane is always saying 'is' and 'are' and talking of 'facts'; and when I told her once that I be-

lieved if we could look in the right way we could see into fairy-land, just as we can make out figures in shadow pictures, she said, 'Nonsense.'"

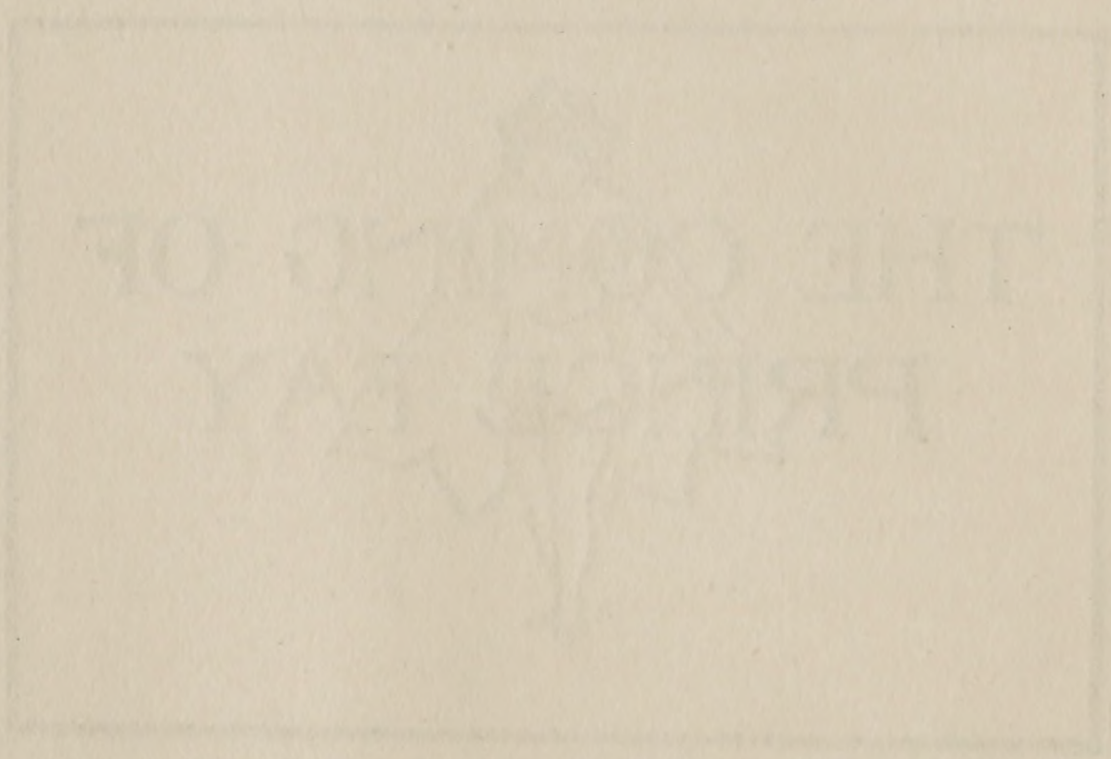
"Well, my boy, you will have to learn all about the busy world in which father and mother live," said his mother, stroking the wavy hair and kissing the white brow, "and if you ever find your fairies, I hope they will be the busy, useful, sensible ones, who will teach you good, useful things, for mother counts on her baby boy to be her blessing and comfort in the future, as he has been in his baby days."

When the lights were lit, the sheets of white paper that bore the laborious writing of the punishment task were found to be very much blotted with tears, and the book from which the lines were copied decidedly the worse for wear.

The next day, fortunately, was Saturday, and that meant no lessons and no Miss Sloane. So with brisker manner, and a face from which the clouds were passing, Roy gathered

up books and papers and put them out of sight. Then, closing the door of the room in which all his woes and struggles centred, he scampered down to the cheery glow of the library fire.

THE COMING OF PRINCE FAY



CHAPTER II

THE COMING OF PRINCE FAY

LESSONS had gone better for a week. Miss Sloane was always more amiable after a crisis. Much as a good, sharp thunderstorm clears the atmosphere, so the growing tension in the nursery had led to the "row," as Roy slangily described it; and afterwards peace reigned. Then, Roy himself was really trying very hard to do well. The words "For mother's sake" had a great influence in his little life, and while he remembered, he did try to keep his mind on his work so that she might be gladdened by good reports, and the dear eyes that he had seen tearful might be bright with pleasure, and smile on him in a way that would warm his little heart.

Of course he still looked for fairies in playhours, and went to sleep weaving stories of the wonderful land they peopled, but he succeeded

in keeping them out of his mind when his thoughts had to travel the straight matter-of-fact roads laid out by historians and geographers, or climb the steep stairs of the multiplication table, bounded by addition, division, and subtraction.

On a certain chilly evening, after an especially good day, he was stretched out full length on the library rug, watching the crackling logs and enjoying the comfortable warmth. He was thoroughly contented and happy, for it had been a good day; and he had had his mother all to himself for the past two hours, so it had given them time for several chapters of the book through which little folks can wander with Mr. Long by lake and stream, over barren or through the wooded glades of the forest. As the logs crackled and sputtered, he was thinking how he would like to be like little Chickadee, whose cheery note and merry ways bring the gladness of spring to all who see his funny, pirouetting little body, or watch his sharp eyes as they look confidingly at his human friends.

The door opened and mother held out her arms to say good-night. She was going out to dinner, so the good-night kiss could not be given after he was tucked away in his little bed. "Good-night, my little Chickadee," she said, kissing the top of his head as he nestled in her arms, burying his nose in the big bunch of violets on her breast, "you can stay up an extra half-hour, and then let Christine give you your bath and tuck you up in your little nest, and of course mother will kiss you again when she comes in, though you will be fast asleep and will not know it."

Roy watched the sleigh drive away over the deep, hard snow, listening at the window to the crunch of the horses' hoofs and the tinkle of the bells until stillness reigned again. A great silver moon shone down upon the white expanse of lawn, and the glitter of frost crystals scintillated on the trees, bushes, and window-pane. A little chilly draught came in through the window, however, and the warmth of the fire invited him back to the rug.

Some hours of very energetic coasting after

school had made him comfortably tired, and now the stillness of the room, the warmth of the blaze, and the rythmic ticking of the clock soothed him to drowsiness. He was on the border-land of dreams, and might have entered it in a few more moments, had not an unusual sound aroused him. He sat up and listened. Was it only the singing of a damp fragment of the log, yielding itself reluctantly to the flames? No, no heating process had ever or could ever bring forth those silvery tones, for they were the distinct notes of a bugle call.

Roy's eager little eyes, now quickly cleared from the mists of sleep, searched every nook and corner around the fire. He had just begun an examination of the logs piled in the wood-box, when the call sounded again, this time unmistakably nearer, so that it assured him that he was very near the solving of the mystery. The top log was a piece of silvery white birch, with some moss still clinging to it, and a hole stretching some way into the interior just at the place where it had been sawn

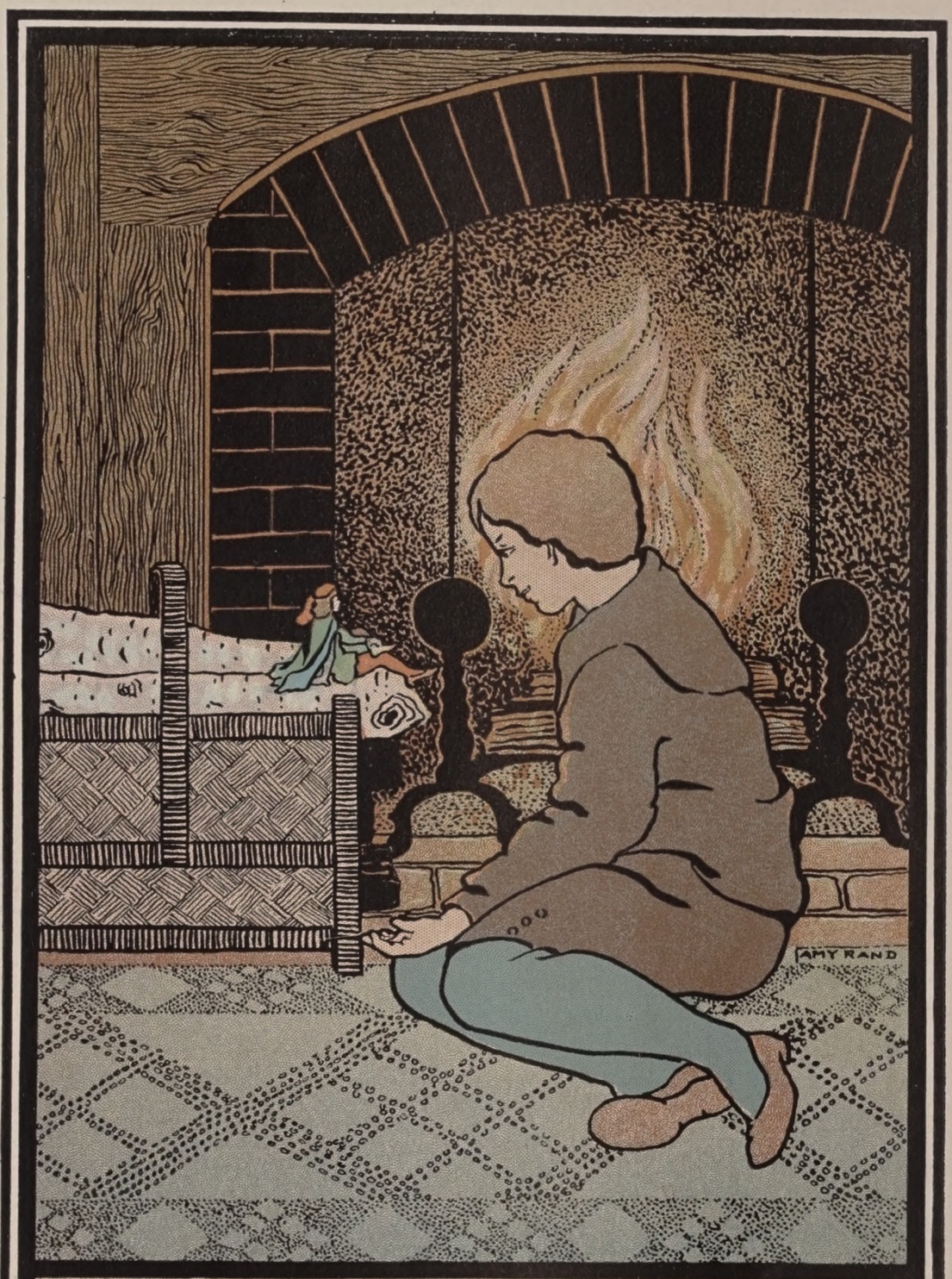
off. It looked as if the hatchet or saw had struck into the middle of a squirrel's or woodpecker's home, the larger part of which must be found in the corresponding log.

Into the hollow Roy stuck an inquiring finger, and brought out a small, hard object that he laid on his palm and examined in the glow of the firelight. Could his eyes be deceiving him? Was it really what it seemed? Tiny as it was, it gleamed in iridescent green and gold, like the wing-case of the diamond beetle; and it was unmistakably a perfectly fashioned little shoe. There could be not a moment's doubt that it was a fairy make and of fairy possession.

With a thrill of intense excitement, Roy peeped into the wood-box again. Was the other part of the log there? Of course, if the fairy's shoe was found in the smaller half of the hole, the fairy prince or elf or brownie must be in the larger end, and this was perhaps the explanation of the silvery bugle call. Carefully Roy removed the upper logs until he reached one near the bottom of the box that

showed the white bark of the birch. There could be no doubt that this was the missing half, for the hatchet marks corresponded and so did the white and black grain on the bark.

On looking closer, he could see the dark entrance to the hole that had once been the home of some feathered or furry family. Anxious as he was to solve the mystery, Roy had not the courage to slip his fingers into the hole. It would be such a bitter disappointment to find nothing after this wonderful hope had been awakened, and he seemed on the verge of the mysterious land of " maybe." If, on the other hand, a fairy was really hidden there, it would be almost as bad to explore blindly into his hiding place, for it would be almost an insult to pull him out as you would a crab from the rocks or a frog from the marsh weeds. The best plan was to await results, so Roy piled all the logs back, put the treasure log on top, where the red glow of the firelight could play on it, and then he sat down to watch,



ON·THE·BIRCH·LOG·SAT
A·LITTLE·FIGURE

holding the dainty, gleaming shoe carefully in the palm of his little hand for fear of injuring it.

The minutes ticked away and nothing happened. Roy sighed deeply and looked from the log to study the face of the clock to see how much more time he had before he would be called to bed. When he looked back again, he caught his breath with a gasp of surprise, for there on the silvery birch log, with his face turned to the fire, sat a little figure dressed in green velvet, with a tiny cap of the same material, no bigger than an acorn cup, in which was daintily pinned the brightest feather from a humming bird's breast.

The little fairy sat with knees crossed, looking passively into the dancing flames, and nursing in one hand the shoeless foot, which was encased in a tiny red silk stocking. The velvet hunting coat that fell gracefully back from the shoulders was lined with crimson silk and held in place by a pin that gleamed with the unmistakable red fire of the ruby. At the

belt was a silver bugle, which explained the call that at first aroused Roy to the presence of his unexpected guest.

"Hard luck," sighed the fairy, still gazing at the fire and talking apparently to himself; "bad enough to get into a hole like that for a long, lazy winter sleep, as if I were a hibernating animal; but to come so near being cast into that mass of flames and smoke would be out of the frying-pan into the fire with a vengeance."

"But fairies cannot burn, can they?" exclaimed Roy, quite forgetting in his interest that the little figure in green had not addressed him, or even seemed to notice him.

The fairy turned quickly, disclosing a bright, merry, earnest face, crowned with sunny auburn curls. For some moments the question was unanswered, while the fairy's eyes read Roy's face with the keenest interest, and then with a ringing laugh he said: "So you can see and hear and understand me at last. That is a clear sign, little Roy, that you have not been looking for fairy-land or fairy folk of

late." Roy was surprised beyond measure at being addressed by name, and only one word could find its way to his lips—"Why?"

"Why?" echoed the fairy, "that 's a little word, but it could call forth a very long answer. I 'll begin with your first question. No, fairies don't burn, but they can change, and I don't want to. If I had tumbled out of that hole into the snow and been frozen, I should have become a frost fairy. If you had thrown the log into the fire while I was asleep, I should have become a fire fairy, like those there who keep dancing in and out of that great red chasm in the burning log."

Sure enough, as Roy followed the direction of the pointing fairy finger, he saw in the glowing cave of light some graceful dancing figures. They were small, hazy and indistinct, and their clothing seemed to be of flimsy blue and purple, rose colour or yellow, with here and there an intense shade of green. With fascinated eyes, he watched them in their merry play, and almost forgot his guest, until recalled by his silvery voice asking patiently,

"Now are you ready for my second answer?"

"Yes, indeed, but I don't understand how it is. I have watched the fire so often and have never seen the fire fairies before."

"That really comes after the question 'Why?' but, Roy, I'll answer it first. You could not see the fire fairies until I showed them to you, and you could not see me while you looked for me. The land of 'maybe' is so near the land of 'is' that the only way to find the first is by giving your mind and heart and thought to the second. You must have been especially good and studied hard and have kept your mind on one thing at a time lately, or you never would have seen me to-night. Why, all last summer I watched you, and laughed to myself when I heard you sigh and worry because you could not find us. I saw you go hunting around among the ferns and flowers for the land which you could not possibly discover that way."

"Well, please tell me plainly, so I will never forget, how can I find fairy-land whenever I want to?" asked Roy earnestly, for this was

perhaps his only chance to find and hold the secret.

"First, never look for it; second, be very faithful to the things you ought to do, and then, if you love the fairies and they love you, perhaps all of a sudden you may see them and share with them the sunny hours in the world they people."

"I shall remember," said Roy, very thoughtfully, after he had sat some time thinking out the answer to his question; and then he added, "May I know your name, and would you like to have your shoe?"

"My dear Roy, never ask two questions in one breath. It muddles the brain and spoils the answer," replied his guest, lying down on the silvery log, with his head pillowed on his arm in a graceful, easy attitude, as if he were thoroughly at home and greatly enjoyed the warmth of the fire. After a pause he added:

"Yes, put on my shoe for me; I may get chilblains, because you see my toes must have been pretty cold these last days, and now the

fire is waking them up and making them tingle." It was with some difficulty that Roy adjusted the tiny shoe, for his fingers felt dreadfully big and clumsy, but when it was accomplished he settled himself close to his new friend and waited for more information.

"My name is Prince Fay, and as we are certainly going to see a great deal of each other in future, I will tell you a little more about myself than you could guess, even with that story-weaving brain of yours."

"How do you know I love stories?" interrupted Roy.

"Why, I can read that in your eyes, and fairies can read the stories there as you think them, and I have often laughed, when I have sat by you on the lawn or swung with you in the hammock, at the castles you built in the air and the lazy, flimsy, gauzy fairies, elves and pixies with which you peopled them. I am glad you never found the foolish fairy-land of your dreams, because it was the land of 'could n't be' and 'should n't be,' and there you could only have been a very lazy, unhappy boy."

Roy looked decidedly annoyed. He thought it rude of one almost a stranger to criticise thus, and very impertinent indeed to read dreams that were not thought out for his entertainment. "I do not like fairies who find fault and criticise, and I shall not like your fairy-land, because it must be dull, and I would n't be at all surprised to hear that you learn lessons there too." Prince Fay laughed good-naturedly at Roy's rather cross little speech.

"Of course we learn lessons. Life would not be worth living if we did not learn something all the time. Why, for example, think of the lesson I have learned. I only got through just in time or I might have been made into a flimsy, flamey fire fairy. But I 'll begin again where you interrupted me. I was born in the trumpet-flower vine. I am trumpeter to the Queen, and so are all the members of my family. If you knew anything about fairies, you might have guessed that at sight of my green and red livery, which shows the colours of the flower of my birth,

and the humming bird's feather is from the breast of my dear little steed."

"Horses with feathers! I never heard of such a thing," exclaimed Roy, who was not quite willing to credit Fay's statements where they did not agree with Grimm and Hans Andersen, his great authorities on fairy lore.

"I did not say 'horses.' That name does not suit a humming-bird, though he is one of the swiftest and longest-flying birds, and we trumpet-flower fairies always ride him by day, using the moth by night when he is resting."

"I thought fairies had wings; they often have in the picture books," sighed Roy, who felt as if his fairy education needed a good deal of revising to bring it up to date.

"No, we don't need wings, and if you are to learn anything in our world, you must forget the books and pictures you have read and seen. Hans Andersen was a lover of fairies no doubt, and old Mr. Grimm may have been all right, but Germany and England are n't

America, and we can't be supposed to do things as they did over there; and besides, you must remember that your mother, and perhaps your mother's mother, read those same stories, so they were about real old-fashioned fairies, who did things in a very foreign, out-of-date way, and you cannot judge up-to-date fairies from their standpoint."

Roy saw the force of his argument, and begged Fay to take up the thread of his own story again. "Well," continued the Prince, taking off his cap and examining the feather and the jewelled brooch that held it in place and shot red lights from the gleam of the fire, "you must know that every flower has its fairy. At the opening of each bud, a new fairy is born, and the colours of their clothing must suit the colour of the flower. If you have learned about nature, you will know that each caterpillar has its own plant or bush or tree, and that the butterfly or moth hovers around it after it has come out, a beautiful winged creature, from its ugly little grub-case. But, Roy, the naturalists do not know why; they

don't understand that those are the fairy steeds that attend on and carry the little people who own the flowers. Why, it is part of our work to open the chrysalis and groom those butterflies when they first come out, and we see to it that they serve us faithfully afterwards."

"But you said you rode on the humming birds," interrupted Roy, anxious if possible to catch Prince Fay in an error.

"Yes, of course; that is because the ruby-throated humming-bird is so fond of our flower, and he builds his nest away up in the vine, and we help watch the young, and in return he is very willing to be of use to us. You must know that the birds and the fairies are very closely allied, or else how could the summer fairies get away before winter?"

"Get away? Why, where do they go to?" asked Roy with wide-open eyes.

"Why, South of course. We leave the world to the snow fairies and frost sprites, and go to where the flowers are blooming."

"But you could not ride all that way on the tiny humming-bird, that does n't look much

bigger than a bumble bee," exclaimed the little listener.

Prince Fay uncrossed his legs, and rising on one elbow said impressively, with a raised forefinger that looked almost ridiculous, it was so very small: " That 's where you have to learn. Your fairy-land lessons begin early, young man, though you must not think they are not true because weary humans with no imagination call them nonsense. I see you never heard that the little ruby-throated humming-bird travels from Central America to Labrador and back every year, in its incessantly active little life. Its outstretched wings measure barely two inches across, which seems to you big clumsy mortals very little; but in its brightly jewelled little body lives a force that propels it through the air at a speed and height which take it instantly beyond the range of human vision."

Roy yawned. It was very rude, but then it was past bedtime, and he thought Prince Fay was getting away from the point of his story; besides, the allusion to Central America

and Labrador savoured of geography. His guest was not at all offended, but laughed brightly and said: "Roy, I think I will finish my much interrupted story to-morrow; but now I wonder where I can live. I 'm a flower fairy, and my own special flower is only a hard, bare, leafless plant just now, covered with ice and snow, while my Queen and all her attendants are away in the South; so you must give me a home. If you put me in the fire, I should have to be a fire fairy; out of window, I should be frozen into a frost elf, and I should be very unhappy locked into the cupboard or set up on the mantel-piece. What can you suggest, little friend?"

Roy thought for a moment, and then his face brightened. "Why, I have it; I 'll take you to the greenhouse, and if the gardener or any one else comes, you can hide, and I 'm sure it will be warm and cozy in the flowers." The Prince accepted at once, but assured his little friend that he did not worry about any of the mortals who might come or go, for they would never see him. It was only to children beloved

of fairies and fairy-loving that he could ever become visible.

Holding out his hand, Roy helped Prince Fay to his shoulder, and together they passed into the dark, desolate drawing-room, out of which a glass door led to the conservatory. Roy entered the room bravely, and then as the shadows closed round him, making the furniture look strange and ghostly, he halted. "Afraid?" whispered the fairy, with a cheery laugh, "I'll help you. We know more of electricity than those good Hans Andersen fairies." So saying, Prince Fay drew a little jewel-hilted sword, and by some mysterious process a bright light blazed from it.

Roy saw his way easily to the conservatory and unlocked the door, passing into the white, damp, scent-laden air. Flowers gleamed pale and mysterious in the light, and the whole place looked as never before to the boy's wondering eyes. Springing from his shoulder to a small orange tree, fragrant with white blossom, Prince Fay waved his hand imperatively in farewell, saying, "Hurry back, for your

nurse is calling you, and it is long past bed-time."

Roy turned to listen, and when he looked back to the blossoming branch on which he had left Prince Fay, the tiny figure had vanished and only the swaying of the blossoms showed that some one had been there.

ROY TURNS DOWN
CROSS-PATCH ROAD

CHAPTER III

ROY TURNS DOWN CROSS-PATCH ROAD

SOMETIMES, after a glorious day, we go to bed with a last happy look at a star-bespangled sky, only to rise the next morning and find rain rattling against the window-pane, snow hurling a white flurry around the shivering trees, or a damp, dismal fog shutting out the view and proving a very effectual wet blanket to any attempt at high spirits. This was not literally Roy's experience on the following day, for the weather out-of-doors was fine enough, but his happy yesterday was, alas, followed by a to-day in which storm and fog and all the other dismal combinations of atmospheric disturbances were to find their counterparts in his own little heart and life.

There is an old saying, which everybody knows, about getting out of bed the wrong side, and it became clear to the whole household that Roy had chosen that side, if there was

such a one to his pretty little white bed. Mother said her darling had been up too late the night before, which statement he contradicted in a tone that made her face sad and solemn. Nurse remarked that he was cross because he had overslept, and he angrily told her that was her fault, for it was her place to wake him.

When he reached the breakfast table, where the family had begun without him, his big brother called him " shock-headed Peter," because he had brushed his hair in too careless a hurry; while his oldest sister, who seemed to him gifted in asking awkward and ill-timed questions, inquired if he had remembered to clean his teeth. His father tried to pour oil on the troubled waters by saying there could not be much the matter, for his appetite was certainly unimpaired, at which, out of sheer perversity, he complained that his porridge was burned, he hated eggs, and the coffee was nasty, a word which he knew his mother very much disliked and had strictly forbidden him to use.

Realising that it was a clear case of crossness, and that all the world would seem at sixes and sevens to him until it wore off, his family with one accord ignored him, and the breakfast went cheerfully on, despite the one little clouded face and grumbling voice that tried hard to make a note of discord in the harmony of the home.

If Roy was ill-humoured in the dining-room, it was natural that the schoolroom should take on a more gloomy look, and the very atmosphere seemed charged with warnings of trouble to come. As he arranged his books and pens and other working materials, he said to himself that he knew Miss Sloane would be more aggravating than ever, and that he did not see any use in stupid lessons anyhow. Poor Roy! this was a sorry failure after all those valiant efforts to be good and faithful, to win success and happiness by earnest application.

How is it these reactions come after good spells? Why cannot we just naturally keep on being good the way we start out? Perhaps

it is because the sentinel on guard begins to think there are no enemies to watch against.

To Miss Sloane's credit, be it said, she was remarkably good-natured that day, and any little boy who did not deliberately want a "row" would have gotten along famously with her. She called him "Roy, dear," instead of "Roy!" When he assured her persistently that eight times seven made sixty-four, she calmly said, "Try again, dear, you will soon remember." This mildness, I am sorry to report, he met by a tirade against lesson-learning in general, and this day's lessons in particular, which he described by the mal-apropos epithet of "vile," a word again which was not allowed by either mother or governess in any such relation. The fact was, he was angry with Miss Sloane for being nice to him. He wanted an excuse for a fuss, and as it takes two to make a satisfactory quarrel, her persistent mildness made him more angry and irritable.

The worst morning will, however, come to an end, and when Miss Sloane departed, worn

out with the tussle, Roy found himself with a number of unfinished tasks to work over alone, and with a headache to make that occupation even more unpleasant. "Bother everything!" he exclaimed, slamming his books on the table and overturning his chair. "I 'll leave the whole wretched business and go to the conservatory until lunch. I 'm dying to see Prince Fay, and I know he will sympathise with me over all this wretched work that mean old thing has given me to do in my play-time. Of course fairies don't have to plague their heads with lessons or be pestered with governesses."

Slipping down-stairs, he made his way to the conservatory, and his face perceptibly brightened as he breathed in the damp, warm, scent-laden air. The scene was very different from that of the night before. Daylight revealed the colour of each flower and showed all the delicate trailing leaves and tendrils of the vine. Roy remembered about where he had left his fairy Prince, but of course he could not expect that sprightly little Fay in hunting green to sit still where he was put. He began, there-

fore, to search diligently amid rose bushes and palms, ferns, daffodils, lilies and geraniums.

Alas! it was to be one more disappointment in a very disappointing day, for nowhere was there a trace of last night's visitor. Once he thought he caught the sound of an airy, elusive laugh, but that may have been his fancy. As he became convinced that his search was in vain, he became more and more irritated, and shouted, "Prince Fay! Prince Fay! Where are you hiding? I call this an unkind trick to play me."

"And what 's that you may be saying, Master Roy?" asked the gruff voice of John, the gardener, as that worthy emerged from the far end of the house. "And it 's myself who should scold you, I 'm thinking, for you left my door open into the parlour; and with such a cold night as it was, you might have spoilt half my plants, you might indeed."

"Bother your old plants!" was Roy's retort, and, fond as he generally was of John, our very cross little boy flung away into the house, banging the conservatory door behind him.

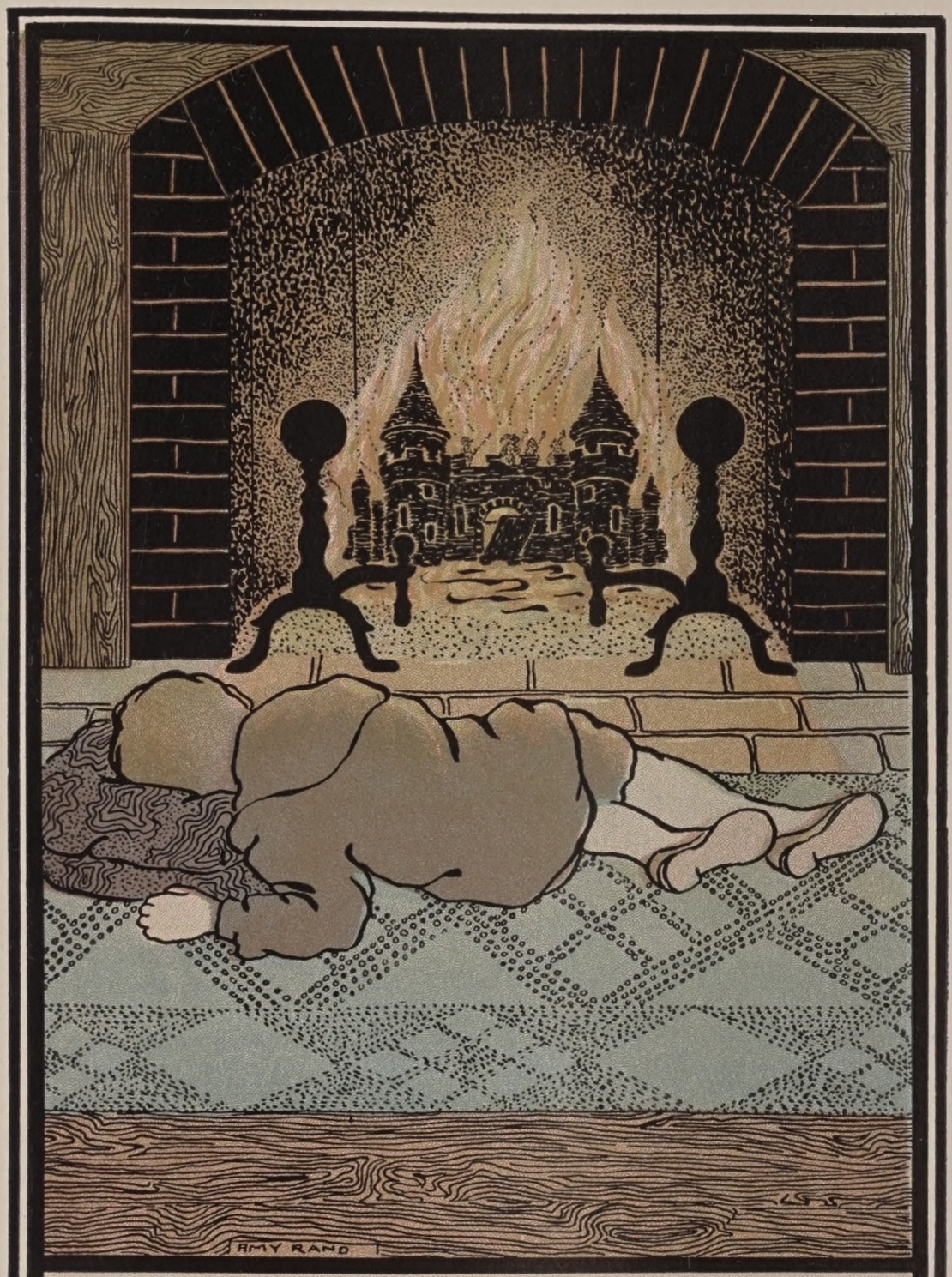
He sought the library and flung himself down on the rug before the fire. He pondered long upon his miserable lot, and tried to make himself believe that he was a much-wronged, much-misunderstood little boy, against whom the whole world had combined in cruel intent to spoil his fun and thwart his plans.

Sometimes a good long think alone helps one to get around to a point where things look more natural and as they ought to be. As Roy lay before the fire, cross and discontented, he became aware that the fire was crackling very good-naturedly. At first he was angry at that, and poked viciously at the little bubbles in the wood where the sap sang merrily, and little blue flames danced round the dozing embers, but the persistent good temper of flames and sparks and glowing logs began to warm his little heart, which had been trying so persistently to keep itself cold, hard and disagreeable.

"How I wish I could get good and happy and cheerful again," he sighed at last, and, pillowing his head on his arm, he began to try

to count the sparks that ran along the nearly burnt-out end of a big log, that looked like a rocky headland in a sea of brilliant red embers. Now when little boys of naturally sweet and sunny tempers are cross and disagreeable, there is very often a cause; and if they are tired or sick, though they still ought not to give way to the cross feeling, mothers can find it out and know how to sympathise and help them back to the happy path of sunshiny life.

Roy was a tired little boy, and, though he thought he was very wide-awake, the eyes that watched those entrancing little sparks were blinking in a very tell-tale fashion, and ere long the lids shut down and the long, silky lashes lay on the soft, pink cheeks that glowed so rosily in the firelight. Everybody knows that one can often see much further with one's eyes shut, and that the things seen are sometimes vastly more interesting. Roy was not aware that his eyes were tired, but he began to see much clearer and further than when he at first started to watch the fire.



THE·LOG·HAD·TAKEN·ON THE·FORM·OF·A·CASTLE·

The big log had taken on the form of a castle wall, bastioned and turreted like a strong, mediæval fortress. A doorway, with watch-towers on either side, showed beyond it a wide courtyard; while in front was a deep moat, the waters of which glowed with sunset hues. As he watched the grim fortress, a little figure in golden armour appeared upon the wall and commenced to pace back and forth, the light of the setting sun gleaming and flashing from his spear. Another and another appeared, until it became evident that the castle was well garrisoned.

For a long time the scene remained unchanged: the great, dark, fairy castle, with its turrets and battlements, its loop-holes and drawbridges, towered darkly over the bright moat, filled with fiery waters, tossing and rippling as under the touch of the wind; while the sentinels and soldiery climbed to the towers, paced the battlements or hurried busily to and fro.

Then came the sound of stir and excitement; the portcullis fell and its dark length bridged

the moat, while over it hastened chariots and horses. Some of the horses were ridden by warriors, with armour and accoutrements gleaming and flashing. Others bore graceful ladies of high degree, whose garments of clinging, cloudy gossamer and whose golden tresses floated behind them on the breeze in their hasty flight. Here and there rubies and emeralds, diamonds and amethysts, gleamed in the flimsy purple and blue and green of their draperies.

This pageant lasted but a few moments, and then there was another change. Night seemed to have fallen. The gates were closed, the bridge drawn up; the castle walls showed dark and uncertain against a gloomy sky, and only the sullen red of the moat gave light to the scene. Watching closely, in the dark Roy saw strange, silent foes steal on the fortress. How they crossed the moat, he could not tell, but they were there scaling the walls. They were clad in blue and grey, and seemed to cling and creep swiftly upward, unnoticed by the garrison.

As he watched, the inhabitants of the castle were awakened and rushed to the walls, and a battle royal raged. Figures in steel grey met the gleaming gold-clad defenders, and the clash and struggle that followed sent the enemy slipping and toppling backward into the red stream beneath. Again and again fresh enemies rushed to the attack, and sometimes they reached the parapet and hurled their glittering foes down head long into the moat that greedily engulfed besieged and besiegers alike.

Roy's breath was coming short and quick with excitement. He knew nothing of the cause of the strife, nothing of this enchanted castle, nothing of its people, but all his sympathy was with those warriors of the golden armour, and against the stealthy, steel-blue foes that attacked them so relentlessly. A great silence seemed suddenly to fall. The little watcher held his breath. Surely the crisis had been reached. For a moment both the armies halted in action, and then a brilliant light shot skyward and the walls of the palace fell with

a mighty crash; while blue and gold warriors were flung into the air and fell amid the ruins.

The crash brought a cry of horror from Roy's lips, and on the night scene rushed a flood of daylight, and he heard his mother's voice saying, "Why, my darling, did I startle you? You must have been fast asleep." Fast asleep! No, indeed, he had been far too excited to sleep; but where was his castle? Before him was a smouldering log fire, with the big centre log just fallen and a confusion of sparks hurrying up from the blackened ashes, while little blue flames chased them chimney-ward.

"Mother, what was that dreadful crash?" asked Roy, rubbing his eyes and striving to look with a clearer vision into the big fireplace. "Crash, my darling? I suppose it was that big log caving in, and perhaps the banging of the door as I came in, for there is quite a high wind blowing." Poor Roy, what a disappointment! A smouldering fire was all that was left of his wondrous fairy castle. He had

awakened to find himself very much in the land of "is."

It was only dreamland. He realised now that that was true. His fairies were sparks and drift-wood flames; his castle an old black log; and the whole wondrous pageant a dream of a sleepy brain. As he gathered himself together and turned to his mother, he whispered, "I 'm afraid I was dreadfully cross and disagreeable, mother dear, but I am very truly sorry now, and I will try to be a very cheerful little boy for the rest of the day."

He firmly resolved that the afternoon should be spent in conquering his neglected lessons, but as he marched away to wash his face and hands for dinner, he thought to himself, with a real sense of loss, "I suppose Prince Fay was all a dream too, because I could not find him; and I am further from the land of 'maybe' than ever, and it is all very, very disappointing."

It is wonderful how sleep changes the whole aspect of life at times. We are down-hearted when our head touches the pillow, and we

wake with a cheerfulness that makes us sing or whistle as we dress. Our brows were furrowed with care as we turned off the light, and the fleeting glimpses in the mirror showed us how worry had turned down the corners of our mouths. We come to the breakfast table with brow unfurrowed and lips smiling. How is it? Was a tired head weighing too heavily on a weary spine and sending all sorts of unhappy or uncomfortable nerve telegrams to brain and heart, to eyes and ears; in fact from head to foot of our sensitive bodies? Or are there in dreamland such restful stretches of green fields, such dear faces to greet us, and such pleasant happenings that we are comforted and made to feel that there are always better things coming than we had feared?

Roy's sleep was not long, but it was sound, and it had carried him into the land of his desire. He had seen the fire fairies, and had travelled away from his supposed trials and troubles, which had seemed so hard and crushing for the moment. That little doze by the fire had done him a world of good. He woke

to see that he had made himself and others unhappy for nothing, and a generous use of cold water further helped him to bring to the table a bright and cheery face. He did not even resent his elder brother's remark that "baby's eye-tooth must be through; he is so much more amiable."

ROY GETS BACK INTO
THE RIGHT PATH TO
FAIRYLAND

CHAPTER IV

ROY GETS BACK INTO THE RIGHT PATH TO FAIRY-LAND

IT had been a good week. The record, both in and out of the schoolroom, showed well for Roy, and that he was earnestly trying his best was without a question. Working hard and being good brought the inevitable reward —happiness. The days seemed brighter, and the desire to sing and whistle made Roy as cheery as a little bird, while his sunny face was a joy to behold by those who loved him.

In his own little heart, when he thought of it, there was a sense of disappointment and loss, for he had to believe that Prince Fay was only a dreamland fancy, and that the wonderful little friend, who held for him the key to fairy-land, was as unreal as the bright little figures that peopled the fire city of his dream. After that afternoon nap and his sudden awakening, he had not even thought it worth while

to visit the conservatory, for it certainly held no more real fairies than the pile of burned logs into which his castles had dissolved themselves.

He did not give up his dreams and fancies, but it seemed to him that he was further away than ever from the road he sought, and yet in reality he was taking the quickest and surest way thither. When our delightful friend, "Alice in the Looking Glass," wanted to reach a given place, she found she must deliberately walk away from it to get there. Roy had seemed to turn his back on fairy-land when he banished it from his thoughts to study well and make a new record, but that was the very way to find Prince Fay again.

Lessons were over for the day, as it was Saturday and Miss Sloane only came for music and drawing in the morning. Roy was having a royal time in the snow. The swift, thrilling descent of a lawn three hundred feet long on a steep hillside, covered as it was with a smooth, ice-crusted blanket of snow, made a splendid course for a sled. Over and over again he

shot down from the terrace, with little flurries of snow rising on either side behind his bright runners like steam. It was a royal rush down-hill, that made the blood tingle and thrilled the heart with a vague sense of possible danger; but the trudge uphill again, dragging the sled, was the dull, tedious part of the program.

Under his bright red cap the sunny hair blew in a bright tangle of disorder. His cheeks grew rosier every minute, and a merry laugh rang out between his little white teeth each time a bump and jolt threatened to part him from his flying sled. Time flies quickly on such a cheery, wintry day; and mother, watching from the window, was rather sorry to have to call to that very active little bundle of wool and fur, with the happy flushed face peeping out of it, that it was time to come in.

In from such fun! Oh! that was too bad. Roy felt tempted to shout back, "Why?" He knew well, however, that mother disliked that little word, especially given with a discontented or complaining accent, "Why! oh! why must I?" Roy, I am glad to say, conquered the

rising discontent, and after a moment of struggle shouted back, "All right, mother dear," and a moment later she heard him on the porch, stamping the snow off his shoes and whistling merrily.

Going down to meet him, mother rather regretted that she had to remind her little son of a Saturday duty that had been postponed from morning and must now be undertaken. Quite a number of birds were members of the household. There was a pretty brass cage with tiny foreign finches fluttering joyously from perch to perch; some with coral red beaks, some with bright plumage, others of more sombre dress, making themselves admired by their sweet little trills of song. Another cage held a number of canaries, sometimes singing so loudly that you would think they were competing for a prize to be given to the one that could drown all other voices with his own ecstatic notes. At other times, I 'm sorry to say, they varied the performance by a very ungenerous bickering among themselves, that sometimes ended in a fierce flash of angry

beaks and flutter of yellow wings, after which a little bunch of loosened feathers would float out of the cage.

Besides these two family cages there was one containing a very dignified bullfinch, who sang at times, in a deep-toned voice, a funny little song, to accomplish which feat he had apparently to wind himself up like a mechanical toy. His black-capped head twisted in one direction and his tail in the other with great precision as he jerked out the notes.

Now Roy was wild with delight when these feathered friends had been given him, and at first it was great fun feeding them and cleaning their cages; but when the newness of possession had worn off, and this became a duty which must be attended to, Roy often found himself wishing there were no perches to clean, no food cups to fill, and no gravel to sift or replenish. The question often on mother's lips was, "Have you fed the birds?" Often the answer came, "I forgot" or "I had n't time."

To-day mother had herself excused him in the morning, thinking that after the sun was

down and the air too chilly for outside play, the duty could be fitted in before tea-time. When Roy came in this afternoon and was reminded of this duty, his good mood made him answer cheerily; and still whistling, he set to work cleaning and scraping until the cages looked as good and clean as if they were new.

Twilight was gathering outside, a star shone over the fir tree, and little clouds in a pale blue sky were flushed rosy pink or clear amber, as they said "Good-bye" to the sun that had already dropped behind the hill. Roy was through with his work, and was watching the evening changes on the snowy scene, when an impulse made him shake off his dreamy mood and call to his mother, "Is there anything I can do to help you, mother dear?" "Yes, my darling," came the answer; and following the sound of his mother's voice, he found her standing at the dining-room door talking to John, the gardener.

"Roy," she said, "we have company for dinner and you shall help me arrange the flowers. Go now with John and help to bring

them in while I fetch the vases. Mind, John," she added, " they are all to be yellow this time, narcissus and jonquils, some tulips and plenty of my favorite freezias for the smaller vases." Here was work that Roy loved. The warm, damp, earthy smell of the conservatory was a delight. Holding the big basket with its growing pile of golden treasure, and now and then wielding the scissors himself to sever the smilax and tender fern fronds, was a delight indeed to this child, with his passionate love of the beautiful and his keen enjoyment of colour and perfume.

It was strange that he should not have thought once of Prince Fay, as he followed the gardener through the green aisles of the conservatory, but his mind was so full of the flowers, and he had so accepted the belief that his fairy friend was no more real than the fleeting images of his dream, that he returned to the dining-room with his beautiful burden, not having once looked beneath fern or branch for the little green figure with its jaunty cap and hunting horn.

It was delightful work, twining the green smilax and maiden-hair ferns over the white damask; and still more did he enjoy arranging each golden narcissus in the tall glass vase that was to stand in the centre of the table. Just one more big trumpet-shaped flower was needed to make the bunch perfect. Mother had been called away, and he wanted that vase completed before her return. He dived his hand down and found just the right flower. It was a firm, glorious specimen, with big, strong, spreading petals and a deep cup with beautifully frilled edges.

Just as Roy slipped it into its place, his hand shook and he gave a little scream; something lay all curled up within it. Roy was not foolishly frightened at bugs or snails, and often enjoyed watching them in the garden, but on the dining-room table it was a little different. He did not want to shake this insect out onto the table, where it might hide beneath a spoon or plate. Dropping the flower back into the basket, he ran and turned on the light.

How pretty the fern-strewn, flower-decked

IN·THE·FLOWER·STOOD
PRINCE·FAY

table looked in the soft light of those yellow-shaded electric globes. Turning to the basket with a little shudder, he cautiously picked up the flower he wanted and peeped into it. Was it, could it be? Yes, impossible as it might have seemed to his unsuspecting little mind a moment ago. His eyes could not be playing him false. There, in the yellow depth of the long flower trumpet, stood Prince Fay. He had evidently been fast asleep, for he was rubbing his eyes with one tiny hand, while with the other he rested against the flower's petal, as one might rest against the pillar of a house.

His green velvet coat was all yellow with pollen, and his jaunty cap had fallen at his feet. "Oh, dear!" he yawned, "I was having such a good, old sleep. What on earth did you give me such a shaking up for? You might have been a little more polite, I think."—"Is it really you, Prince Fay?" whispered Roy breathlessly. "Guess it is," he answered with a little laugh, "only I 'm too sleepy to be quite sure." At that Roy was so delighted that he started to dance around the room with the

flower held high in his hand; and the dear little Prince received such a jolting in his yellow bed that, when Roy at last came to a standstill, he was very wide awake, holding on to the edge of the flower with a most desperate grip and shouting, "Stop!" at the top of his tiny lungs. "That's a nice way to welcome a friend," he exclaimed. "What are you going to do next, little madcap?" he inquired; but his assumed wrath rippled off into a merry laugh of good comradeship, which showed him to be the same good-natured little Fay of Roy's fireside experience.

"Well," said Roy, "I am going to put your castle, bed, or house, or palace, or whatever you call this yellow narcissus, in the middle of this big vase, so! Now, Prince Fay, you can be the chief guest at my mother's dinner party, and I hope you will behave well and enjoy yourself."—"My dear little boy," said His Highness, balancing on the edge of the flower and adjusting his velvet cap, shaking the golden dust from his cloak and restoring himself to his usual gallant appearance, "I don't

care a pin for this dinner party if you are not to be present. Grown-up folks are so stupid. They only have two eyes apiece, most of them."

It was Roy's ringing laugh that made the room echo this time. "Only two eyes! Why, how many do you think they ought to have? They would look mighty queer with any extra ones."—"Well, you look all right, Roy, and you have two pair."—"Nonsense, Prince Fay, you can't quite have woke up yet." At this the little Prince looked very solemn and pretended to dive back into his bed, but in response to Roy's "Please don't," he settled himself more comfortably and proceeded to explain.

"No, Roy, I am talking fairy-land sense, whatever you may think of it. If I stay here at your mother's dinner party, I 'll have a dull time of it. Her guests will not talk to me. They will most of them not even see me, and if they do catch a glimpse, their eyes are not good enough to appreciate me as I deserve. Now children are different. They most of

them, unless weary grown-ups have spoiled their second sight, have another good pair of eyes, the eyes of their imagination, and they see beautiful things that the learned stupids don't see."

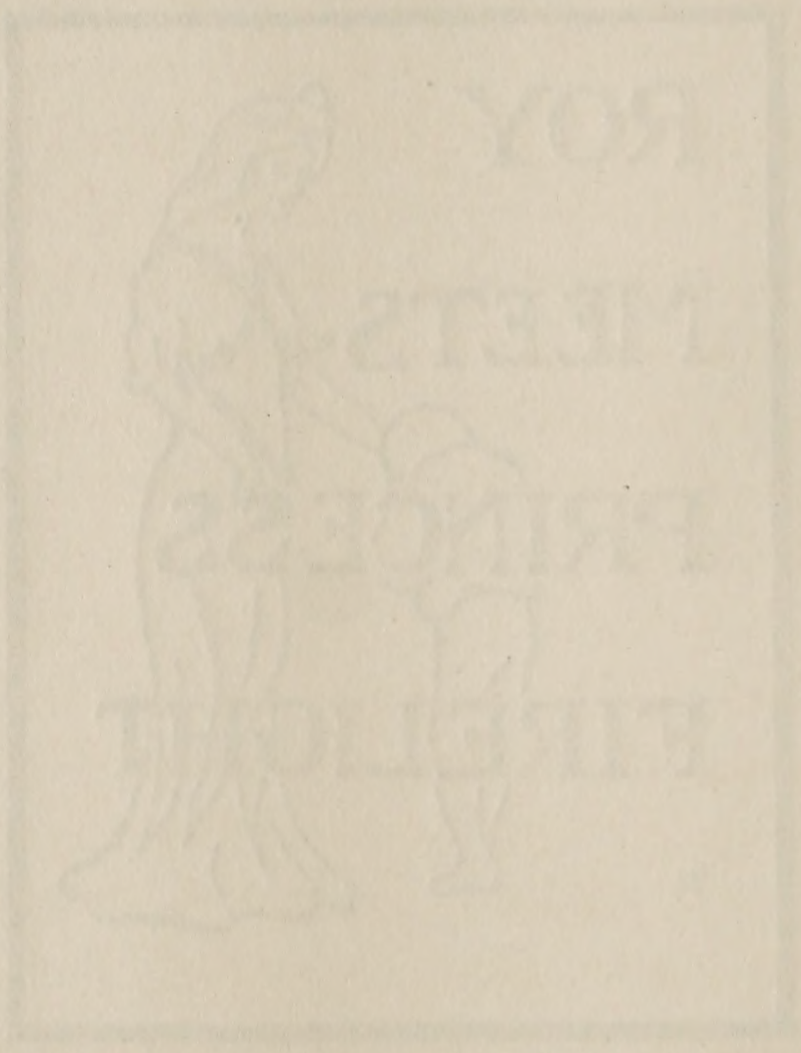
"Prince Fay," said Roy rather sharply, "my mother 's a grown-up and she 's not stupid, and I think she has beautiful eyes. You will have to take that back as far as she is concerned."—"Right you are, Roy, your mother had two very good pairs of eyes when she was a little girl, and she uses them both still sometimes when she has time to play, but at other times she thinks it is right to keep the extra pair shut; but I think she knows enough to understand you and me perfectly." So saying he arose and made a sweeping bow to a white-clad figure standing smiling in the doorway.

"Well done, my darling; the flowers are lovely. Thank you, my little helper. Now you will have to run off to the schoolroom, where there is a lovely fire, and such a nice tea waiting for you." Roy hesitated, looking

back at Prince Fay, who had slipped back into his flower and was peeping over the edge. He heard him whisper in an eager little voice, "Take me with you."—"Mother, may I have one flower for the schoolroom?" asked Roy, as his mother bent over and kissed him. "Why yes, my darling," she answered.

He quickly stretched out his hand and lifted the big yellow blossom, and as he did so his mother's eye caught sight of something within. Looking closer she exclaimed, "Why, there is a poor moth. Do be careful; it may fly out and get into the fire. Better put it into the greenhouse, for out of the window it would surely freeze." Then as the little boy tiptoed away, she said to herself, "Strange! No moths should be coming out at this time of the year. I must look it up and see what kind it can be"; but the noise of father's home-coming banished the thought, and Roy rushed up to the schoolroom safely with his fairy friend.

ROY
MEETS
PRINCESS
FIRELIGHT
R



CHAPTER V

ROY MEETS THE PRINCESS FIRELIGHT

HOW cosy the schoolroom looked! The lights were not yet lit, but there was no need of them, for a great, cheery fire burned in the fireplace, and the ruddy glow of leaping flames played with the shadows, making even the far-away corners smile in response. Placing his flower in a tall, thin vase on the small table near the window, Roy held out his little pink palm for his friend to alight. This feat he accomplished by dropping out of the flower head first, and turning a neat little somersault before alighting on his daintily shod little feet.

"Hey ho! So here we are again, and a real cosy time of it we can have by that glorious fire, if you will kindly escort me to its hospitable glow. My friends, the fire fairies, are very busy to-night, I see." Then looking down over his little person, he exclaimed, "But what a sight I am! I must ask you to act as valet

and brush off this yellow pollen, that makes my velvet clothes look positively shabby." —" Certainly," responded Roy, and dropping Prince Fay on the table rather unceremoniously, he ran off to mother's room, and returned breathless with a silver-mounted clothes-brush, big enough to exterminate half a dozen fairy folk of Prince Fay's dimensions.

The little Prince was sitting Turk fashion on the table, shaking the yellow pollen out of one tiny shoe, when he looked up with an exclamation of horror. " Hold hard, old man!" he cried, " those wretched bristles would tear my clothes to pieces and leave me pierced and mangled on the gory field. You must look around and find something more fairy-like to answer the need of the occasion."

While Roy stood uncertain as to what implement to use, a clear, silvery note, calling " Swe-et, swe-et " made him look up at his canary's cage. The yellow songster was peering down with bright, little, black eyes, his crested head cocked knowingly on one side. A flash of yellow and he had vanished to the

bottom of his cage; another flash and he was up again with a soft feather in his beak. As he dropped it, it floated down to the table and fell at the feet of the tiny, green-clad gentleman.

"Ah ha! That is a sensible bird," cried the Prince. "They always are our friends, and this is just the very thing with which to brush me off." Roy complied very willingly, and soon had his friend as neat and smart as possible; and admired to his heart's content the soft, dainty fabric and flashing jewels that showed him so clearly to be a person of distinction in the fairy world.

"Now, Roy, I will be your guide to-night, and you shall have at last a glimpse into the land of your desire." So saying, the Prince stepped onto Roy's hand and pointed to the glowing hearth as the way to be followed. Could it be really an ordinary log fire at which those grey eyes gazed in wonder? To Roy, as he settled himself upon the rug, it looked like a glorious ballroom. Columns and pillars upheld a domed roof and galleries of golden fret-

work; while the floor was of the same precious metal, burnished to such brightness that the eye could hardly bear to look upon it. Hither and thither, now in stately minuet, now in giddy waltz, glided and whirled the most fascinating little figures, their flimsy clothing made of every imaginable shade of blue, green, violet and yellow; while in their midst was a glorious little being clothed in billowy white robes, girdled and crowned with rubies.

"Dreaming again," said Roy, trying to pinch himself. "No, you 're not," said Prince Fay, who was balancing himself on the brass rim of the fender; "you may have to sleep before you can leave us again, but that part of the program will come later. Just now I am especially anxious to introduce you to Princess Firelight, who was a particular friend of mine in the pine forest before she was appointed, with her attendants, to the realm she now so eminently graces." The last sentences were said in a louder tone and evidently intended for the ears of the fair lady herself, as the gallant little figure of our Prince advanced bowing

low, while his feathered cap swept the ground, and the music to which the dancers had tripped so gaily hushed to the faintest whisper.

A silvery laugh responded, and the queenly little figure swayed graciously to meet him. "My dear Prince," she answered, "I am indeed glad to welcome you. You have come at the right moment, for my ladies are almost tired out. To-day we received a challenge from the frost fairies. They are exceedingly busy in their own realm, and they not only declared they would out-do us, but their prince, who has long been a persistent suitor for my hand, has threatened that he would come himself and visit me within my own bright castle. To tell you the truth, he is a most charming fellow, and I think he must be weary of leading his legions to war, but you know of course that we cannot seriously think of our wedding until the springtime relieves us from our duties. I was the cause of his undertaking these arduous duties, as doubtless you know; and now I am doing fiery penance for my coquetry."

"Of course, of course," sighed Prince Fay,

" my own heart throbs, I fear, with a jealous pang when I think of it. It will come all too soon; but for the moment I wish to introduce a friend of mine, a mortal who is not blind and who, despite his monstrous form, is only a little boy." Another silvery laugh greeted these words, and the tiniest of little hands was stretched up in greeting to our rather shame-faced little boy, who wished for the first time in his life to lose inches rather than gain them.

" Dear Roy," were the friendly words of greeting, " you are no stranger to me. I have known and loved you long. You have not seen me, but often I have chased the shadows in your schoolroom. I have dried your tears when you have sat looking into my kingdom; and have rejoiced to warm your cold fingers when you have stretched them out to me in an appeal I quite understood, though you did not put it into words or address it to me personally. Welcome to my ball to-night. I will touch you with my sceptre, that you will not be inconvenienced by your unfairy-like proportions; and I will touch you also, my

dear Prince," she added, " that your charming personality and flowery clothing be not lost and merged into my kingdom of glowing flames."

How light was the touch of that tiny, golden sceptre, with its flashing ruby tip, but what a marvellous effect followed! In a moment the pillars and dome, the columns and galleries of the palace had reared themselves far above Roy's head, and he found himself stepping on the golden floor with feet as tiny as those of his companion. In fact the throng around him was composed of beings taller than himself, for only the little page boys and flower girls were children of his own size.

As he stood bewildered, the music broke forth again, and hundreds of dancing figures whirled and glided past him, the Princess Firelight herself leading them, with one white hand resting lightly on the green-velvet-clad shoulder of Prince Fay. " Come, little mortal," said a voice behind him, and turning, he looked into the sweet childish face of a tiny creature, evidently not long out of the

fire fairy nursery, if there was such a place.

"I like that," said Roy, with some indignation. "If I 'm little, what are you?"—"Littler, of course," was the saucy response. "No, you 're not, either," remonstrated Roy; "there 's no such word; it 's bad grammar. You should say 'smaller.'"—"This is not school," said the little elf, turning a pirouette on her tiny toes. "Come along and I 'll show you the fountain and the fishes. That is more fun than dancing when you are tired out, as I am." There was no sign of fatigue in the airy little creature, clothed in pink and gold and twinkling with tiny, crystal spangles, as she leaped back and forth before him.

"Flamelit" was her name, he learned, and merry was her chatter, so that when they sat together at the edge of a great, marble fountain, making ineffectual dabs at the gliding forms of gold and silver fish, they became at once friendly and confidential. "Would you like to know the story of our lady Firelight?" she asked. "It is not long, but it is interesting, at least to those of us who love her. She

THEY·SAT·TO-GETHER·AT
THE·EDGE·OF·A·FOUNTAIN

was a flower fairy once, like your Prince Fay, and the day she was born they found her sleeping in the big half-open bud of a great, white lily. She was always sweet and graceful like her flower, and was as happy as the day was long. The spring and summer is the season of the flower fairies in this part of the world. Only those who fly away south with the birds, or get caught unawares like your friend, can remain flower fairies always. There is plenty of work in the fairy's life, but some of them have hard duties to perform, much harder than others; and when a prince wants to prove worthy of the princess of his heart, he has to do something that means sacrifice, to prove himself worthy.

"There is no duty harder in the fairy world than the leading of the regiments of the Frost King. Some people think the Frost King cruel, and shudder at the mention of his name, but that is all a mistake. He is needed in the world, and does a great, good work. It is the frost that toughens the trees and makes them strong; that locks the ground in winter, and

guards the sleeping roots and bulbs, and that gives to nature its needed night of rest, before the dawn of day again in the sweet sunrise of spring.

"Well, every year our Sovereign asks what prince of her train will volunteer to stay behind and face the cold of winter to lead his followers forth in the Frost King's service. The Lily maid, as you may imagine, was loved and courted for her beauty and sweetness by all the eligible, young princes in fairy-land, but she was full of fun and loved her freedom, and would never say whom she favoured. There came at last a Prince, beautiful and spirited, dressed in the mauve and purple of the passion-flower, in which blossom he had been born. He certainly was passionately in love with our Lily Princess, and those from whom I heard the story say that he would plead and plead with her when they walked together in the moonlight or danced under the fir trees on the mossy carpet of the forest, but she always met his wooing with a silvery laugh and told him she liked him well but loved her freedom better.

" So passed the summer, and with the coming of the fall the fairies gathered in the gold and crimson glory of the fairies' council hall, to prepare for the journey to the south-land. Once more the Prince, brave in the glory of his royal purple cloak, sought out his lady and begged her to name the deed he must dare to win her, or the sacrifice he must pay to prove his devotion. It was, perchance, the mischief of the moment, or a thrill at the sound of the silvery trumpet's call, that prompted her, for as she turned with the flash of challenge in her bright eyes, she said, ' Throw aside your purple trappings and don the icy mantle of the Frost King. Then I will believe in the springtime that you love me well.'

" There are those who think she did not mean it, and that she loved him far too well to wish this separation; but the words once spoken could not be recalled, and the next time she saw him he was tramping away with his followers with face set and stern, and icy steel-grey mail had taken the place of his velvet and jewels.

" The fairies were to leave that night at the

full of the moon, but our lady, weeping dew-drops as she went, sought out the Queen and begged to be left behind. There was only one way,—to exchange her flowery path for the life of a fire fairy; to allow herself and her followers to be gathered with the fallen giants of the forest and the crackling fir cones, that are piled up to fight for mortals the stern onslaught of the winter's chill.

" She acepted the offer, and with her whole retinue of faithful followers she does valiantly her part, and rejoices to live still in the land where her lover abides, though they have never met; and it is only when our lights burn low and our feet are weary that he can send a snowy messenger to greet her with a reminder that some day he will conquer and that she will yet be his."

THE FROST PRINCE COMES

CHAPTER VI

THE FROST PRINCE COMES

THE lights in the great hall were growing dim. Roy, looking down into the water, saw the fish poised motionless as if asleep. Turning to address little Flamelit, he found she had left him, and a cold chill sweeping through the ballroom made him shiver. Looking up at the lights to see what had happened, he noted that the dome of the palace seemed to reach up interminably, and the chasm above was black as night. Somehow this black cavernous vault above him seemed to fascinate him, and as he gazed upward he distinguished tiny points of light that looked familiar. Yes, surely, they were stars.

The music in the palace had grown weird and faint, and it seemed almost like the sigh and wail of the wind. Looking back at the floor, he saw that the little dancers tripped very

slowly and some swayed as if their energy was flickering out.

Roy shivered again, and looking up once more into the blackness he saw a soft, white snow-flake sail down from the darkness into the dull glow of the great hall. A snow-flake I said, but to him it seemed very large, and no sooner had it touched the ground than he saw that he was mistaken in his first estimate. It was a magnificent white steed. Another and yet another descended noiselessly, and on each beautiful creature was seated a knight in steely-grey armour, smooth and glittering like crystal. As they advanced into the light, prismatic colours glowed and flashed from their helmets, shields, and lances.

Bewildered and somewhat awed, Roy hurried into the brighter part of the palace, hoping to find his friend, and came instead upon a golden throne, upon the steps of which many graceful fairy figures, apparently overcome with weariness, lay sleeping. The crimson seat was vacant, but as he stood wondering he saw Prince Fay leading the Princess Firelight

towards it. She looked very sweet and lovely in her flimsy, white robes, that seemed to float around her like mountain mist around some slender flower. That she was weary was very evident, though Prince Fay walked gallantly erect, and the click of his high-heeled shoes rang clear on the golden floor.

The Princess Firelight had no sooner sunk down on the crimson velvet cushion of her throne, than Roy heard the notes of a bugle ring out clear and silvery; and from the shadowy corners of the great hall a whole company of glittering knights on milk-white chargers advanced to stand in a silent circle just where the light revealed them, but not near enough to feel the warmth and brightness that still glowed around the Princess.

Thus they stood waiting until from their midst stepped a tall, upright, princely figure, clad in the same white armour, riding also a snowy steed, but with an added dignity and an indescribably royal bearing that made Roy feel at once that this was their Prince and leader. As he advanced to the steps of the throne, the

ruddy light danced from the diamonds incrusted in his helmet and clasping his white velvet cloak. The same fine gems gleamed and glittered on the trappings of his horse, and as he sprang to the ground a strain of weird, wind-like music seemed to burst forth in welcome.

Quickly he bounded up the steps, and Roy followed, anxious to see and hear the meeting, in which he felt the keenest interest. Standing close to his friend Prince Fay, who had withdrawn a little from the Princess Firelight, he saw the White Prince kneel and raise his lady's little pink hand to his lips. "Dear love," he whispered, "I have come. Out of the dark night, away from the howling wind, to your halls of warmth and gladness; come to tell you that I am unchanged in my love and loyalty. I know all too well that my day is not yet; still there is work for me to do; still in the darkness I must lead my legions, and I cannot carry you away as my heart bids me, or my sweet Lily maid would fade from a warm glowing ruler of light and beauty to a

chilly frost-blighted ghost in the snowy country where I must dwell. I come not to chill your heart, but to tell you that when the sun shines again with spring warmth, when the birds' songs fill the budding forest, I shall surely come for you; and our work being done, and our hearts fully tested, we will go to our Queen's court in the green woodland and claim her sanction to our union."

No word answered this knightly speech, but the love-light in the lady's bright eyes and the tender smile told the story of her beating heart. Stooping, the Prince touched her hand, and as he turned away and clanked, with trailing sword and ringing spurs, down the golden steps to his waiting horse, Roy saw the flash of a brilliant diamond on one of her slender fingers, and looking from it to her face he saw to his surprise that the Princess Firelight was sleeping.

Shadows crept ever nearer; the gold and the rubies, the glory and the glitter of the enchanted palace, were fading. It was like the sunset lights when the great, golden ball of

heaven has vanished, and rosy pink and clear amber pales to the dull, coppery tints of the after-glow.

"Hey ho! It's getting positively cold," called the cheery voice of the Prince at his side, and taking Roy's hand he tripped lightly down the steps and hurried into the darkness after the retiring knights. Their leader had halted, and, turning in his saddle, looked smilingly down on the pair, as they caught up with him. "Why, Fay, I 'm right glad to see you, though I suppose I should feel some twinge of jealousy to find you my lady's guest when I 'm shut out in the cold. I heard some whisper of your being still with us, and your summer-like clothing is good to our eyes, when they have grown weary of the everlasting whiteness of the outside world."

Then including Roy with a sweep of his mailed hand, he asked, "You have danced with the fairies of the flame, will you follow us to the serious work of the night?" "Most gladly," answered Prince Fay, "providing you don't undertake to hang us up as icicles by

morning." "No, surely, that would be scant courtesy," answered the knight; and unfastening his white cloak, he bent down and threw it over the shoulders of the green-clad fairy. Taking another mantle from his attendant squire, he adjusted it upon Roy's shoulders, saying in a voice of command, "Frost, snow, and ice, chill wind, and bitter cold, come not near my honoured guests to-night."

In another moment he had whirled upward into the dark dome of the palace, and the squire advanced to Roy and his friend, leading two snowy white horses, whose tossing manes and tails seemed to be fanned by some rising breeze. Hardly had they mounted when, waiting for no guiding hand, the fairy steeds leaped forward and upward into the darkness. It was dark! And as they ascended it became increasingly breezy. There seemed to be great walls of rock on either side of them, hung with funeral drapings, but what their nature and purpose was, Roy's bewildered eyes failed to ascertain. Their pace was so rapid and the wind that rushed around them, blowing his

horse's mane almost into his face, so overwhelming that he became breathless and giddy.

Suddenly they shot out of the chasm into a glorious frosty night. Yes, those were stars above them, and away on the horizon the lights of the great city were scintillating. Now the horses changed their course and floated downward. Surrounding them on all sides was a legion of white steeds, each guided by a knight in glittering mail; while the silver notes of a bugle call gathered them in martial array upon a great snow-covered plain, where already their leader waited to send them forth to the duties that called for their services that night.

"Why, it is snowing," said Roy's mother, as she drew back the heavy curtains and looked out, "but," she added, "it is only a passing flurry, for the stars are bright and the lights of New York are especially brilliant. It must be cold and frosty, and how the wind wails! It is almost like distant music in the pines." Letting the curtains fall back again, she rejoiced in the warmth and brightness of the

room where her guests were gathered. It was fragrant with flowers and cheery with the sound of laughter and voices. She had missed the gleam and flash of armour, and the whirl and rush of milk-white cavalry, though the light flooded for a moment the darkness without and fell full on the advancing hosts of the Frost King. She was only looking with her two brown eyes. The eyes Prince Fay knew she had once used, and could use sometimes even now, were shut, and she could not see into the fairyland her little boy had found at last.

The flash of light seemed to Roy like the coming of daylight, and he wondered at its vanishing again so soon, but no time was left for him to wonder. He was hurried by his flying steed into the very midst of a busy, galloping, and yet orderly throng. The air was filled with music,—now like the strains of a martial band; now the solemn, swelling notes or a great pipe organ, and again a mysterious sighing of æolian harps.

Battalion after battalion of the Prince's knights were starting out in different

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directions, some toward giant trees that bordered the plain, some charging over its smooth surface, and others disappearing in the darkness to carry out orders known only to themselves. When all were sent forth save his own immediate attendants, the Prince turned with a smile to his guests. "Prince Fay," he said, "this is to be a busy night of hard work. We are to bring the temperature down to zero, and I shall have to ride far and fast myself, to see that our duty is well performed; but you can do the honours of wintry fairyland just as well as I could do them, and your horses are perfectly trained and need no guiding. I am off to frost over the house windows, or the big people may see out and learn secrets that are not meant for unbelieving two-eyed mortals."

With a wave of his hand he was off, followed by his retinue, and Roy watched his glittering flight, for the white horses were galloping on the wings of the wind. He saw that they seemed to be charging up a great mountain of stone. Yes, surely, it was a gigantic castle, overwhelming in size as it loomed out of the

shadows. A merry laugh brought his eyes back to the face of his companion, who seemed highly amused at his absorption.

"Well, Roy, since you became my size, and less in fact, for you hardly reach my shoulder, the big frosty world looks very different to you, does it not? What do you suppose that great mountain of stone is, now?" "The castle of some giant," answered Roy. "Yes," said his friend, "you are right, but the giant is your father, and the castle your home, and you generally call it a house." "Nonsense," cried Roy, with indignation, "my father is a fine, tall man, but I won't have him called a giant; it is disrespectful."—"Nevertheless, my little mortal, you would call him that yourself if you could stand on his hand just now. Why, child, you are no bigger than his thumb nail; but come, time flies; you will have to go home before your mother misses you."

At a word the horses were off over the plain in hot pursuit of the regiment, that was crossing and recrossing it. "Do you know what this great, white country is, Roy?" asked

Prince Fay. "No," he answered, "I should suppose it was miles of open country, and as it is smooth and has no hills nor forests, I should call it a plain." Again the merry laugh, and his friend answered, "It is your own lawn, Roy, and a very lovely, green country it makes for the fairies in the summer-time. I know the size of it well, for one season it was my duty to lead a regiment of dew sprinklers over it every evening, and I had to sleep in a hammock in the fir tree all day after the labour of it."

Roy made no comment, but looked with keenest interest at the horsemen they were fast approaching. Each one seemed to have a basket made of silver filigree on the saddle in front of him, and was sowing its contents broadcast as he rode. "Why, what seed could ever grow on snow-covered ground?" he asked, and for answer Prince Fay made him press closer and look at the shower that fell from each mailed hand. It was not seeds but diamonds, cold, clear, and glistening. The moon had risen, and in its clear, white light the jewels

THE·HORSES·FLOATED
DOWNWARD

gleamed with every colour of the rainbow, and sparkled until the whole moving host seemed to be enveloped in a mist of light and glory.

How long Roy would have stood watching the manœuvres of these jewel-scattering fairies, Prince Fay did not know, for he evidently had no realisation of the flight of time; but his friend placed his hand lightly on the horse's bridle, and wheeling together they galloped off into the darker shadows that bordered the plain. There, giant trees of many kinds reared their naked limbs, and fine white-covered pines, firs, and cedars spread graceful branches heavenward. There again the fairies were busy galloping hither and thither, showering their gems with generous hands, until every twig and needle was incrusted with beauty.

"Come, let us follow the Prince and see his artistic work upon the windows," cried Prince Fay, but before Roy could respond the sound of the town bell rang out clear and insistent upon the chilly air. It was nine o'clock. "Quick! Quick!" shouted the fairy, suddenly wheeling his horse. "Your mother will

hear that bell, and will wonder if her boy is in bed. You have n't a moment to lose."

Such a whirl and rush was enough to bewilder the brain of a fairy, and as Roy was no fairy they seemed to blind and deafen him. He had a confused memory of darting up towards the stars, while the white plain and giant trees sank down, down, down beneath him; of plunging into a deep, dark gorge, black beyond description; of hurrying through the dim fairy palace, where he caught a glimpse of sleeping forms faintly illuminated by a pale ray of rosy light; and then his cloak fell off and was whirled away into the windy darkness, and he staggered out into—could it be? Yes, it was, his own schoolroom.

THE VISIT OF
A TWO-EYED
CHILD

CHAPTER VII

THE VISIT OF A TWO-EYED CHILD

"WHY, my darling, my baby boy, why, you are not in bed yet, and no light burning! Well, I believe you have been asleep in the window-seat in the moonlight." Mother had gathered her little boy to her heart and was covering his cold face with kisses. What had happened after that hurried ride from fairyland? Roy could hardly remember in those first, waking moments, but as he glanced towards the window, and saw the moonlight shining on a wondrous frost tracery of fern and leaves, he remembered; and with the memory came back the words of his fairy friend, "No, you are not sleeping, but you may have to fall asleep again before you leave fairyland."

Now he recalled how, on entering the school-

sleeping figure of the Princess Firelight, with one bright gem scintillating like a living spark on her hand. Roy leaned over and tried to look up the dark space above, down which a little breeze was whistling, but he failed in the effort and retired to the window seat, where he curled himself up and went to sleep.

It was nice to feel mother near him, to hear the rustle of her dress, and to know she would soon tuck him up in an inviting, little, white bed; but when she turned on the light, it dazzled him, and her expression of surprise startled him to full wakefulness. "Why, what has my little boy been up to? Your face is all smudged with soot, and your little hands all cold and grimy."

Roy hurried to his room, and peered in the glass. True enough, he was a sight to behold. "I think Prince Fay might have told me," he cried, rather indignantly, "but perhaps," he added, "I did it all when I went back to look at the palace just now." Mother smiled, but of course she did not understand. She knew enough not to say, "What nonsense

you are talking!" for she had herself had four eyes once, and she liked to use them all sometimes even now.

From the moment mother tucked him up in his little, white bed, to the time he was called for breakfast, seemed only one moment, so sound was his dreamless sleep; and when a flood of clear, golden sunlight broke into his room, as the shade went up, he could hardly believe it was already another day.

It was a little hard to harness his mind down to lessons when Miss Sloane came on Monday. It was such a glorious day, with a splendid frosty crust on the snow, most tempting to one who loved coasting. What a fine flight it would be from the top to the bottom of the steep lawn, gliding down the incline almost too swiftly to breathe, until the final bump at the bottom. Roy, however, had in no way forgotten his resolve to be good, to win his mother's smile and pacify Miss Sloane; and there was also an added inducement, for was that not the only road to the after-reward—Fairyland?

Standing at the window while Miss Sloane laid aside her wraps, he saw, with the sunlight glistening on them, the wondrous tracery of leaf and fern and dainty lace-work so cleverly wrought by the silver spears. "Well, the Frost Prince did his work splendidly," he exclaimed, forgetting his teacher's presence. "Yes," said Miss Sloane, with a shiver, "it is dreadfully cold out, and so slippery I could hardly keep my feet as I climbed the hill. I think, Roy, it would be highly proper and instructing to read over the portion of your physical geography that relates to the action of frost and formation of snow-flakes."

This proposition was carried into effect, but was not at all gratifying or satisfying to Roy, with his new point of view on the subject. How tame were all these prosy arguments and explanations of blind mortals, after a thrilling night with the fairies! Of course it would not do to enlighten Miss Sloane and tell her of the glorious array of white-armoured knights on the snowy chargers, or of the gleaming store of diamonds. She was decidedly of the type

of grown-ups very prone to use that objectionable word "Nonsense," with emphasis on both syllables.

So Roy, without any comment on the wintry subject, plodded on through geography, history, spelling, arithmetic and all the other steep but necessary steps to learning; and when work was over, went out with a bound to harness his sled to the wings of the wind, and send the fairy diamonds glittering in tiny, powdery clouds of brightness to right and left of the sharp runners.

Time passes quickly when pursuits are congenial, and Roy did not realise how long he had been coasting or how tired he was, until by an unlooked-for swerve of his sled he found himself unceremoniously dumped into a snowbank. Having been thrown there against his will, he remained seated in the snowy nest, because it was comfortable and because his eye was caught and mind diverted by the appearance of a carriage toiling up the drive.

The horses may have been sharp-shod, but they stumbled nevertheless, and they should by

rights have had a sleigh behind them instead of wheels. Out of the carriage window peered the face of a little boy, perhaps a couple of years older than Roy, and behind him that of a lady somewhat sharp and angular as to features and keen as to eyes, though they were aided by a pair of somewhat thick glasses, that made the persons stared at feel as if they were for the time being under the scrutiny of a microscope.

Roy became aware that the snow was cold, that his appearance was wild and untidy, and that in his breast was a great desire to vanish to regions unfindable, for he felt certain that a caller with a boy would mean the need of his presence to aid in the entertaining of the visitors. The impulse to fly, however, was checked by the feeling that it would be hard on mother, so he dutifully dragged his sled up the hill to be ready when the call should come. It did come in about three minutes, and mother suggested in a whisper that he would better slip up-stairs and wash his hands and smooth the rebellious mop of hair.

As she turned to re-enter the parlour, she stooped to kiss that untidy little head, and something in her face told Roy that she was not having a very good time of it. When he entered the parlour a little later, an animated discussion was evidently in progress. His mother hastened to introduce him to Mrs. Stark and her son, Hector, and in doing so tried to start the conversation on a new track. The attempt was a failure. Mrs. Stark believed she was on a line of uttermost importance in the advanced and modern method of child training, and that this foolish mother must be set right. It chanced that Roy had left a copy of Grimm's fairy tales on the parlour table. It was a beloved volume, over which he pored on rainy days or when some slight ailment kept him in bed.

It had been his mother's when she was a little girl, and when he was far too little to read it himself his mother had often read him to sleep with that soothing rhythm of words that carried him over far stretches of country with the long-legged storks or swift swallows, into

enchanted forests, through wondrous palaces, or into far-away, snowy climes. Now he beheld his much-treasured book on Mrs. Stark's knee, and she was emphasising her remarks by tapping it with one long, energetic finger.

"As I was saying," she continued, "from his cradle, I have brought up my Hector on the strictest principles of truth and fact. No legend or fairy story has ever been in my house, and the foolish myths that are supposed to be amusing to children, such as the coming of Santa Claus, or the hunting for the Easter rabbit's nest, I would not for a moment permit. My boy is a product of practical common-sense teaching, and I believe any other course most pernicious to the young mind."

Roy's mother never cared for argument, but as she noted the angry flush on her little boy's cheeks, and the flash of his eye, she interposed for fear he might spring in as her champion. "My dear Mrs. Stark," she said quietly, "I am aware that there is a wide difference of opinion on this subject, but it has always seemed to me that imagination was one of the

ROY·WENT·OUT·WITH
HIS·SLED

blessed gifts of childhood, and that it is sweet to give it that which is wholesome, beautiful, and poetic to feed upon, or it may be developed on wrong and dangerous lines."

"You are wrong, quite wrong," exclaimed her visitor, "everything must be sacrificed to truth and fact. What does a child want with imagination? It makes them moon about and waste time. Then you are laying the foundation of scepticism. When the Santa Claus-taught child and the fairy-lore child find there are no such things in reality, they will conclude that there is no God or heaven, and all your other teaching will be questioned as untrue."

"My mother is not," began Roy, with burning cheeks and clenched fists, but his words were cut short by a glance from mother; and she turned to Mrs. Stark with the remark, "There is all the difference in the world between faith and imagination; and while we teach our children reverently to believe in and love the realities their eyes cannot see, we can pray and hope that the blessed instinct of faith will develop in their young hearts, and prove

a sure anchor. When we amuse them with their fairy tales, our manner and our explanations are so different, that they put them in their right light, as an amusement; and the enlightenment of years is not the shock you describe, for all along they never take the subject very seriously. With your permission, we will not discuss the question further before our little folks. Let us agree to differ."

Without allowing time for an answer, Roy's mother suggested that he take Hector out, so that they could have some fun together while she had a cup of tea with Mrs. Stark. The muffling up of the young visitor, and the hunting up of Roy's own, outer garments, which as usual he had mislaid, kept them busy for the next few minutes; and then the boys found themselves out in the crisp, cool air.

Hector was a few inches taller, and a great many pounds heavier, than Roy; and his face had a sullen look that was not pleasant to see. During his mother's exposition of her theories, he had sat staring about the room and swinging his legs back and forth under the chair.

He sat behind his mother, and once or twice made anything but elegant faces at Roy. He brightened considerably when they got out, and they were soon both of them shouting at the top of their voices, as they glided swiftly over the frozen crust.

"Let 's play that this is a fire engine, and that there is a hurried call and an awful fire down there in the Japanese quince bush. Come on, Jack, get the hose aboard." "No," shouted Hector, still panting from the steep climb, "that 's tame. Let 's play that we have wrecked a train and blown up the express car, and that the posse is after us. Spring on your horse, Jim, or those devils will catch us. See that the booty is safe in your saddle-bags."

So saying, Hector was off with a blood-curdling yell; and Roy, very much mystified, went shooting downward with the young bandit, vaguely imagining that a posse was some sort of a wild beast unknown to Thompson-Seton or Dr. Long. His shouts of "Hurry, boys!" "Fly for your lives!" were, however,

quite up to the requirements, and the ride was thrilling in the extreme.

"Now," said Hector, "we will sit on our panting bronchos and rest. We have reached the mouth of the cañon in which our cave is located, and we have time to hide the booty. Let the posse come now, and we will lure them into our fastness, and kill every mother's son of them."

"What 's a posse?" asked Roy in wonder at this blood-thirsty threat. It must be a very dreadful beast to be thus exterminated, he thought, for his tender, little heart had always cried out against the death of even the fiercest wild things.—"A posse! you silly, don't you know? Why, a posse is a lot of men who mount and ride after you to catch you when you are making off with the spoils, money, jewels and all sorts of things."—"Why do they want to catch you if you choose to take your money and things away with you?"—"Oh! you baby, don't you see? We are desperate men. We have shot the engineer and expressman, derailed the engine, and got off

with the money in the express car, thousands and thousands of dollars. You don't know how to play. I guess you are only a baby still."

Roy rose in horror: "That 's stealing and murder, and I don't want to play; it 's wicked, and if you want to kill the posse, I won't; it 's awful." "Little goose," said Hector, with much disdain, "you like to play baby games. I don't; there 's no fun in them."

"I thought," responded Roy, "your mother did n't let you read anything that was n't true. You can't make all that up in your own head."

"Oh! mother would keep me reading history and lessons and lots of dry stuff all the time if she could, but she can't, you see. I get the newspapers, and then I have a chum who gets books downtown, and we read them together. They are not fairy stories, not much! They are true, and they are very exciting; all about fights and adventures and killings, and boys that go out west and do all sorts of big deeds. We read them and then we act them, and some day, when I get money enough to start, I shall

go off to that country myself. Ma won't let me have a gun, but Henry's going to get one. Then we 'll go into the woods and shoot. It 's lots of fun, you bet!"

As Roy never read such books, he lost the purport of much that Hector said, and quite failed to see the fun in robbing, shooting, and killing. The thought of that severe-looking mother haunted him, however, and he said, "I should think you would be afraid to tell your mother all that."—"Tell her! Well, I should think not. She would never give me any peace if she knew; and besides women are n't supposed to know about manly, desperate lives; they just stay at home and look after things."

This view of life was still more unaccountable to the little boy whose mother always had been his confidante, and who always understood everything. "Well, I don't see how you do it. When you are playing, does n't she see and hear you, and ask all about it?"—"Oh, yes, sometimes, and then I say it 's history. The other evening Henry and I were holding

up a stage in the mountains. He had just killed the driver, and I was tying the passengers to trees, for I was an Indian pal of his, and I was going to burn them alive; and Ma asked what this noise meant, and I said, 'We are acting Christopher Columbus, and we are shouting because we have just sighted land.' You see, I had to say something."

"You said that to your mother! you lied to her?" exclaimed Roy in horror. "I think you are a naughty, wicked boy; and if you are a visitor, I won't play with you any more," and Roy flung away indignant, and marching up to the house fled to his own room. From there he saw the guests depart, after overhearing Hector tell Mrs. Stark that the other boy would n't play fair and sulked; while his own dear mother exclaimed in distress that she hoped her little boy had not been lacking in courtesy to his guest. Mrs. Stark had replied very kindly that she was sure it was only a childish disagreement; and it was quite natural, because an imaginative child, accustomed to dwelling in the world of fancy, could not

possibly appreciate the practical point of view of her dear matter-of-fact Hector.

The closing of the door and the sound of departing wheels brought a storm-tossed and angry little boy to mother's arms, where he sobbed out all his story, and was comforted as only mother arms and mother words can comfort.

ROY ENTERS SHADOW-LAND

CHAPTER VIII

ROY ENTERS SHADOW-LAND

THE long winter days were passing slowly but surely. The comforting assurance had been given out that the ground-hog had not seen his shadow on the second of February; and that, in consequence, those whose eyes were weary of perpetual snow and ice might look for an early spring. Roy had ranged the woods behind his home with the earnest hope of seeing his hogship on the memorable day, but had signally failed; for all the forest life he could discern with all his eager scrutiny was the flash of a blue-jay's wing, or the darting form of some red squirrel, with now and then the shadowy form of his grey brother passing from limb to limb of the great lichen-covered trees.

Now the snow was gone, save a touch or two

in some dark, sheltered corner, and the grass was taking on a greenish tinge; while one could almost imagine a hint of red was on the tips of the maple trees. The sunshine, with something more of warmth and dryness than it had given of late, was flooding nature; and yet our little boy was not out in the garden, though the open door of the schoolroom showed it to be empty, and no lesson books were on the table.

Roy was not far away, however, for in the sunny brightness of mother's room a little figure was wrapped up on the lounge, and a very flushed little face lay on the pillow. It had been a strange night of disturbed dreams. Mother, through the open door, had heard him turning and tossing. He had awakened very cold, and she had tucked him up with extra coverings and turned his pillow. Next time he cried out in some suffocating terror, she found he was burning hot, and she had had to give him water.

When morning light crept through his window, he was wide awake, but his head was

heavy, and he had a desperate sense of loneliness and a longing for comfort. That was why mother felt a little, hot hand clinging around her neck, and a soft, little body cuddling into her arms with the old, baby instinct, that knew just how to settle down cosily into the arms God gave as shield and resting place. Roy felt better then, as he dozed off with the feeling of mother's kiss on his brow, her arms holding him close, and the nice, cool, linen sheets under his restless little toes.

When he awoke again, he was alone in a nest of pillows. Mother was dressed, and stood by with some tempting breakfast on a tray. Tempting, did I say? Roy knew it ought to be, and at other times would have been; and it was so disappointing to feel so sick at the very sight of it that he burst out crying and sobbed in the pillow in a helpless, hopeless sort of way. At the sound of this wail of woe, the dressing-room door opened, and papa entered, razor in hand, with a soap-whitened face, at the sight of which tears were changed to laughter; but it was almost a pitiful sound, for it was weak

and uncontrolled and hurt him as much as the sobs and tears had done.

Mother put aside the breakfast, and sitting on the bed gathered the little, quivering figure to her heart. "My boy is sick," she said soothingly, "he shall have only what he wants to eat; and mother will sit and read and play with him all day."—"I 'd be all right if I was not so hot and my head did n't ache so, and if my throat was not so dry and my eyes smarting."—"That 's quite enough of a list to make you feel miserable, my darling; but think, is there anything you fancy?"

A long pause followed mother 's suggestion. "Force would suffocate me; eggs would make me sick; bread is so dry, and I could n't bear the smell of coffee. I used to like steak, but to-day I don't like to think of it. I don't believe there are any good things in the world for little boys to eat." Mother answered Roy's wail with a suggestion of grape-fruit, with nice little pieces of cracked ice in it. That was a happy thought; and after this breakfast he felt better and insisted

on being dressed and tucked up on mother's couch near the window.

From there he could look out on the spreading branches of the great tulip trees, that formed a lace-work against a very blue sky. His attention was occupied for some time watching a bevy of merry little chickadees whirling and pirouetting from twig to twig. Their cheery note came in to him as of glad greeting, and they seemed well pleased with the signs of the passing of winter; though that passing would mean their flight to further northern regions.

Roy heard his mother at the telephone, and, catching the drift of the one-sided conversation, he guessed she 'd rung up the doctor. When she came with a book to sit at his side, he remarked somewhat petulantly: " Mother, I don't want Doctor Newton. He 'll only give me a red medicine, and I hate it; and I 'll be much sicker, because I just can't and won't take the horrid stuff." This declaration was best unanswered.

His mother took up her book and began to

read to him. The book she chose was about the birth of little Mas-ki-sis, the Indian chief's boy, who came to their tepee in the moon of the blood-lilies; and as her voice rose and fell, describing the forests and prairies, Roy's weary eyes closed, and hours passed before he was again awake to the real things about him; though his brain was weaving the wildest pictures, and marvellous, changing scenes came and went, like the moving pictures of a cinematograph.

When he awoke, Doctor Newton was sitting by his bedside, holding his hand. Mechanically he obeyed all the doctor's orders. and then shut his eyes again, and his mother's voice seemed to come from farther and farther away; and then he became conscious only of a pumping, surging sound. It must be the sound of a water-wheel in some mighty torrent. He would walk and walk until he came to it, for he was very thirsty, and this must be a desert. It was dark and hot and dry. The way seemed very steep and must be very, very long, for his feet were growing more and more

tired and his head was weary too, but the noise of the distant torrent was always there, surging and swirling. He would never reach it. He must sink down where he was, and as he thought of it he groaned, for he was so thirsty.

Then he felt some one kiss his brow and cool it, and he opened his eyes and saw he was in his mother's room, and she was bending over him holding a spoon to his lips. He must have been dreaming, for it was evening now. Sunset lights were in the sky, and shadows in the corner of the room. He was in his own little bed too, and many things that he hardly understood had been done to change the room. There was some one else there also, and as she stepped close to the window to examine a thermometer she held in her hand, he understood by her uniform, with its spotless apron and cap, that she was a trained nurse.

Yes, poor little Roy was sick, very sick; and his flushed cheek and dull eyes and strange, wild dreams were the danger signals of a fever that was to give his mother long weeks of

anxious nursing, and was to fill the bright, sunny, little life with the shadow of delirium and suffering.

Night and day glided into each other without any clear line of demarkation. The sunlight had to be kept from glaring upon the tired, little eyes by day, and the electric lights were shaded at night, so that the room was almost always like twilight when Roy woke sufficiently to notice it. If the light was brighter, there were strange things that troubled him. He saw countless faces in the pattern of the wall-paper, and things about the room had a way of gliding towards him and shutting him in, if he looked at them steadily.

This he explained to his mother, and she put a screen at the foot of his little bed. That made things better for a time, but it too troubled him after a while. It was a Japanese screen, black with gold embroidered leaves and birds. These birds must have been storks, for they had very long legs and sharp bills; and one evening, while Roy's head was throbbing

badly and the roaring of the stream was unusually loud, he saw these wretched birds begin to hop up and down. At first he thought it funny; then he became angry, for they seemed to be mocking him. At last he was frightened and troubled and burst out crying. Mother had him in her arms in a moment and tried to understand what he meant by "The horrid, horrid birds will keep dancing all the time. Take them away; I can't stand it." At first she thought they were dream birds, pure and simple, but as the thin, little hand pointed at the golden storks, she understood the trick that the fever was playing with those poor, bright eyes, that looked up to her out of such a wan, shadowy, little face; and she carried the screen away.

Mother had to read and sing a great deal those days. She knew her little boy could not follow or understand the reading, but the sound of her voice quieted him and kept out other sounds that teased him, like his delirious fancies. She was not much of a singer, but in these days of suffering, he had a longing

for the old lullabies of baby days, and they often sent him to sleep, though he wondered why mother's voice sometimes shook and quavered; and other times he would turn to discover that tears were falling on her pretty dress.

That was another thing that Roy had to have during those long days. Mother must wear all the dresses he liked most. There was a soft, grey one, that swished and sighed as she crossed the room; and a white, fluffy one, and a light blue wrapper with lace for the long nights. Mother wanted to wear a simple wash dress like the nurse, but her little boy had very strong ideas on the subject, and he got his way. In fact, I think she would have dressed in anything under the sun that Roy happened to fancy, if it could help for a moment to comfort her darling, who seemed to be so nearly slipping away from her through the land of shadows.

Then there came a dreadful night. Papa was in the room too, and the doctor stayed instead of going away as usual after the call.

Mother knelt by the bed for hours, with her head on the pillow; and Roy felt so strange and weak and frightened that he begged her to hold him; and she put her arms over him and said between her sobs: " Yes, my precious, if mother's love and prayers can hold you, you shall be held tight; I can't, I can't let you go."

It seemed every few minutes that the doctor did something or other to him, or made him swallow things; and it was so hard, for he just wanted to be left alone. At last, when it was near morning, he felt a lovely, quiet, comfortable feeling stealing over him, and he turned to kiss his mother's head on the pillow beside him; and then he drifted off to sleep. He was far away in dreamland when mother's arms unclasped, and she slipped to the floor in a dead faint, and papa had to carry her away. And he did not hear the doctor say to the nurse, " If he sleeps well on into the morning, we may save him yet; this is the crisis."

They waited and watched, but Roy in dreamland was launching a boat out into a

beautiful, blue lake. Sunlight sparkled on the water, and white swans sailed in the shallows, looking down on their own, graceful reflections. As the boat glided out, he sprang in; and as he settled himself on its crimson cushions he noticed how the water-lilies parted on either side to let it through. There were no oars in the boat, but Roy did not much care, for the breeze that fanned his cheek was so full of the damp sweetness of the woods.

One could imagine the mossy nooks where that breeze had played, filled with delicate fronds of pale green ferns springing from the carpet of the forest. One could imagine it had been playing with the veil of mist from the grey rocks near some little water-fall, helping the stray sunbeam to change it into a fairy rainbow. Now that breezelet was playing through Roy's hair, and it seemed to leave there some drops from the forest stream, so cool and refreshing was its touch.

Roy did not hear the doctor whisper, " Thank God, his brow is moist and his respiration decidedly better," for the same little,

breeze was singing to him, and it was like the sound of fairy harps, with here and there the note of a distant hunting horn. The boat was moving steadly, swiftly, over the shining lake. Raising himself to see the power that moved his sailless, oarless boat, he saw that six beautiful swans were harnessed to it by golden ribbons. They were not the white swans that had been sailing so peacefully in the shallows, but black ones with bright red bills; and the sunlight on their rare plummage made it glow with an iridescent sheen like the gloss on a black pearl shell.

He was too comfortable to move; too contented to question; so he just glided on. By and by he noticed that a flock of gorgeous butterflies was following him, and as they came nearer they parted, completely surrounding the boat, and on a closer view he saw that the escort was not of winged insects only, but that on each one a tiny figure rode, closely corresponding in the colour of its flimsy dress to that of its flying steed.

With a cheery laugh Roy hailed them. " So

this is Fairyland again," he said, and a voice at his elbow answered, " The land of the dream fairies, to which we carry the children who love us and think of us often, and from which they always go back better and brighter because of the beautiful things they see and hear." " But I don't want to go back," said Roy, turning to look for his companion. He was a little, old man, with snowy locks and a long, white beard, but such merry eyes and rosy cheeks that he hardly looked old. A crown glittered on his head, and his long cloak was of purple velvet, bordered with ermine.

Roy was not at all surprised or startled to see him there, and was glad of his company, for he felt sure this new friend would guide him safely through the land into which he was gliding so peacefully. " You have had a hard time, little Roy," continued the Dream King, " and I am glad to have you with me for a while. I had your mother once when she was a little girl, and I have waited long for you; but I 'm sorry you had to come through such a dark gate of sickness. When you go back,

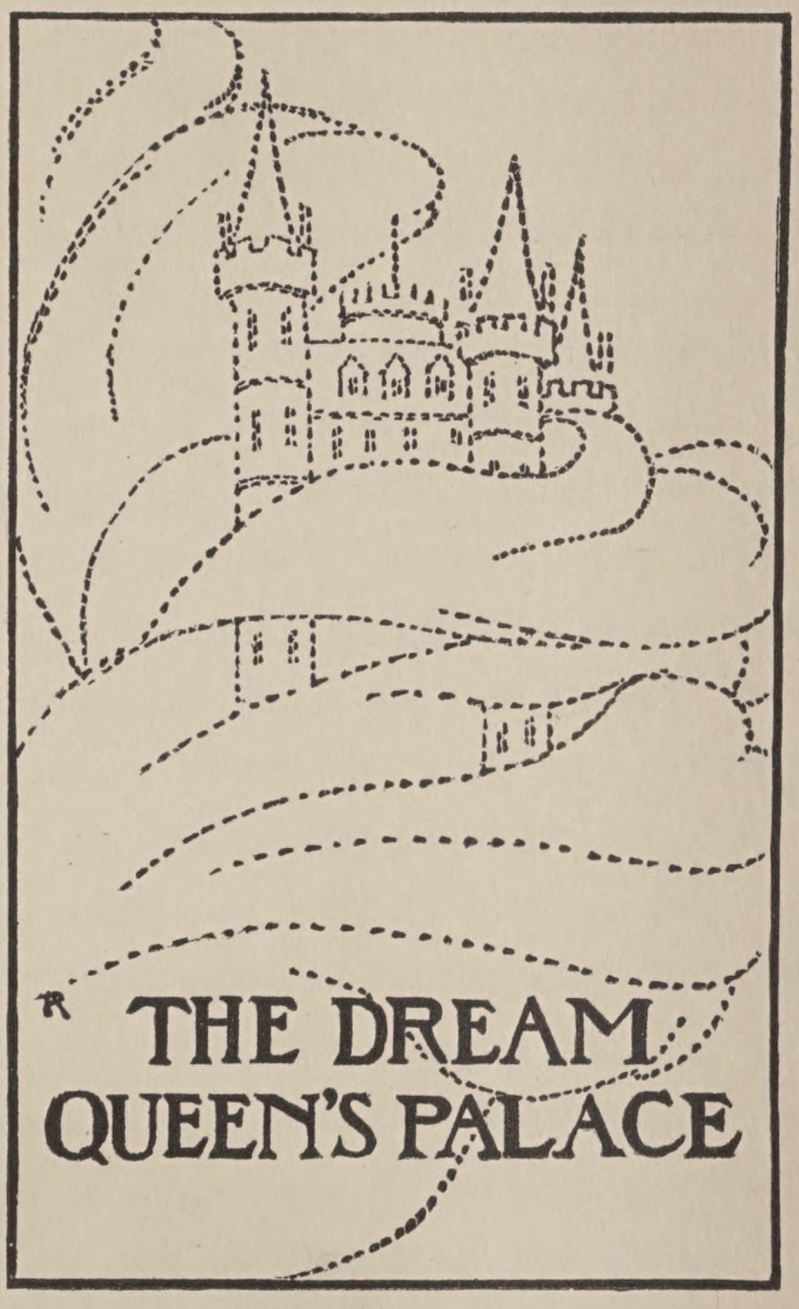
we will see to it that you pass into the world of 'is' by a safer, easier way."

"What is this lake?" asked Roy, not quite understanding the fairy's allusion to gates, as he did not remember any. "It is the Lake of Peace, and it is fed by the River of Slumber. Its waters lead through many other streams to the Sea of Health. We will stop soon at my palace, and you shall see such sights as your eyes have never looked upon before." So saying, he went to the prow of the boat and lifted the golden reins. In a moment the six black swans rose on the wing, and the boat rose with them. In some mysterious way it seemed to change from a boat to a chariot. Beneath it on either side, and behind it also, Roy saw the outstretched wings of the six black swans, and down far, far below them was the lake.

On, on they went until the lake vanished, and the waving tops of trees swayed below them, like a green and silver ocean, and before them lay a glorious range of blue and purple mountains. Over this range they sailed, and

then with a whir of wings began to sink downward. Looking over the edge of his boat or chariot, Roy could see a great stretch of green valley nestling between the rocky heights; and a nearer view showed parks and gardens, in the midst of which was a white palace with turrets and minarets touched with gold.

Sinking back on his downy seat, he sighed with contentment, "Well, I 'm glad I came."


THE DREAM
QUEEN'S PALACE

CHAPTER IX

THE DREAM QUEEN'S PALACE

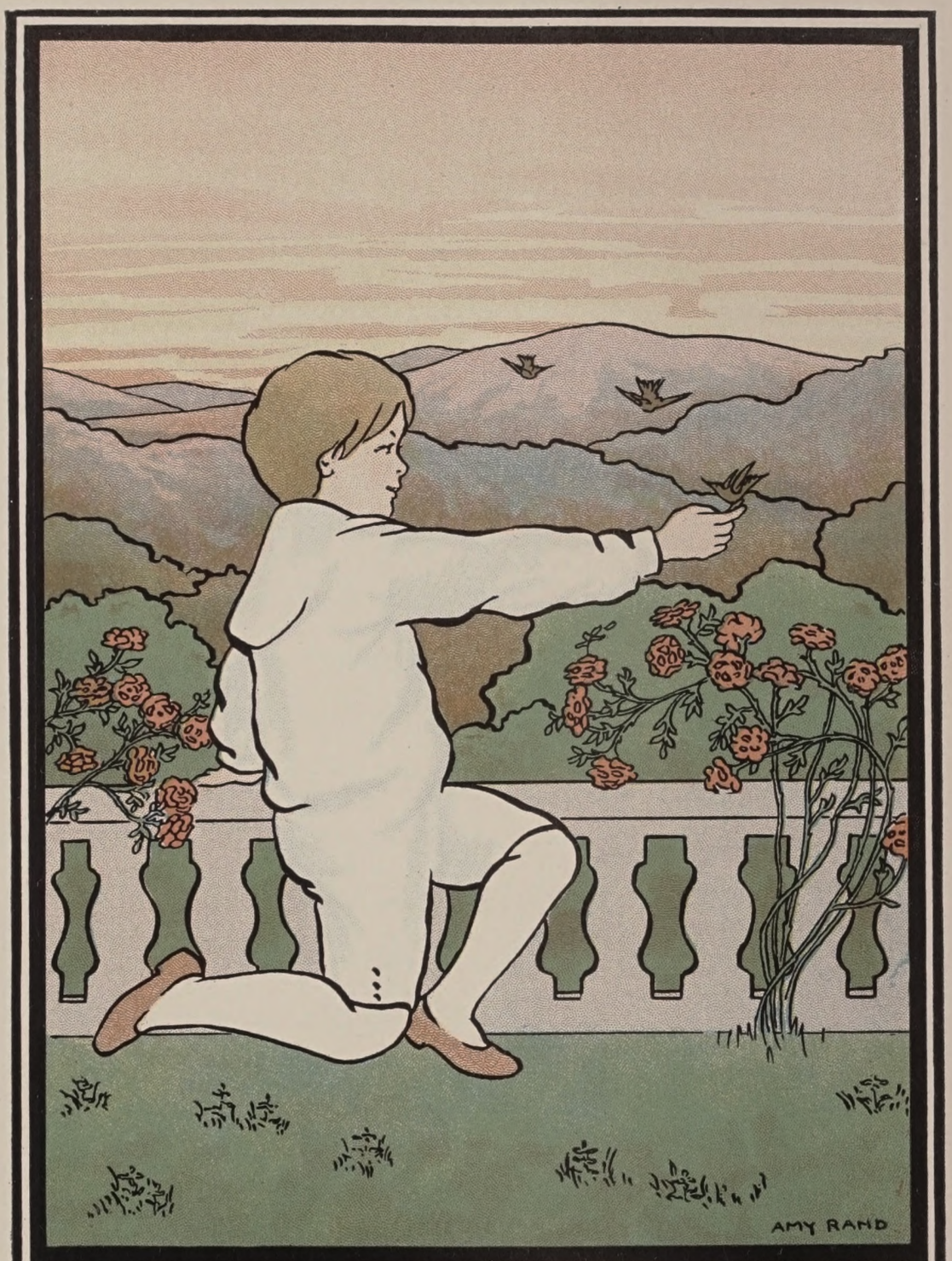
THE boat, or chariot as it seemed now to be, stopped at the foot of a long, sweeping flight of stairs. They were wonderful steps, made of onyx. Roy had often admired the piece which his father used as a paper-weight, and so recognised the same translucent clearness and rosy tints as he looked at the stairs beneath his feet. The King, who had helped him alight, took his hand and smiling at him kindly said, "Let us come, you must be hungry."

Roy noticed that the fairy was now taller than himself, or was it that he had grown down to fairy size on touching the ground of this enchanted land? Not stopping to puzzle it out, he climbed the first, long flight of steps, and was aware that a whole bevy of gay fairy

forms was escorting him. He reached a wide, marble terrace, in the midst of which was a great fountain.

"Let us rest here," he pleaded, and sat down on the edge of the onyx basin. As he looked into the depths of the clear water, he saw a floor of golden sand, and little caves or grottoes of spar and crystal. Beautiful fern-like growths waved in the clear water, and everywhere gold, silver, and steel-blue fish swam and sported. He dabbled his hand in the water, and instead of their flashing away, the fish swam to him and stroked his fingers with their soft, shiny tails. Looking up he saw a beautiful column of white spray from the fountain, shooting into the sunlight; and sunbeams, catching the falling drops, made them gleam like a shower of opals.

"Are you rested, little boy?" asked his friend, and Roy did feel himself so much rested that he danced up the next flight of steps with laughter on his lips. It was good to feel well again, for he had been so weak and so tired.



ROY·STRETCHED·HIS·HANDS
TO·THE·HUMMING·BIRDS

There was another terrace, and this was of grass, as smooth as velvet and bright with flower beds; while round the marble balustrade roses trailed in luxuriant growth, lifting blossoms of every tint to fill the air with fragrance. Here again Roy wanted to rest, but his resting took the form of running from rose to rose and holding the cool, dewy blossoms close to his face, glorying in the pale tints and glorious blood-red colours. Bright-hued humming birds darted hither and thither or rose on vibrating wings; and when Roy stretched out his hands to them, they came and touched his fingers with their beaks, and even lighted for a moment that he might see their ruby-decked throats and smooth the iridescent plumage of their outstretched wings.

"Come on, Roy," said his host, helping him to the last flight of stairs; and when he had mounted it, he saw a great array of fairy courtiers gathered around a queenly figure, clothed in white, her robes all embroidered with golden lilies. The crown upon her head was studded with opals, that looked like dewdrops touched

with the sunlight. She stretched out her hand to Roy, and when he would have fallen on one knee to kiss it in real cavalier fashion, she drew him to her arms and kissed his eyelids.

"Dear little boy, thrice welcome. We are no strangers, but you have come to us through a very dark, desert road, and you shall have all the pleasure the palace can give you." Placing her hand on his shoulder, she led the way to a part of the terrace that was covered in by silver arches, which sheltered long tables, glittering with cut glass, gold and silver plate, and decked with flowers.

Sitting beside the Queen, he watched the merry, graceful courtiers that gathered around the tables; and then, as strains of music came floating from an orchestra hidden amid ferns and flowers, he dined on the most delicious viands he had ever tasted. All through those days of fever, he had not wanted to eat, and the taste of medicines was forever in his mouth. What a delightful change this was! It was good to feel hungry, and good to have everything you could possibly want to satisfy that hunger.

"Now, Roy," said the Dreamland Queen, when he had finished, "if you will come with me, I will show you some of the beauties of the palace; and then you shall ride back into the wide-awake world, where your dear mother will be waiting for you." Roy followed her through the great, golden gates of the palace, designed of curiously wrought, twisted dragons, into the wide hall, cool and shady. Rose colour was the prevailing tint. It fluttered in the curtains, smiled from soft, inviting divans, and cheered you as you looked at the long flight of stairs, which were carpeted with it in thick, velvety textures.

Electric lights gleamed from half-open rose buds, and the sound of trickling water came from a tiny fountain, that emptied itself into a pink marble basin. There were plants with delicate foliage and fragrant blossom in one corner of the hall; and from among them the sound of a bird's sweet notes rose liquid and clear. "That is a nightingale, Roy. You have never heard one, but you have read of them. They are first cousins to the mocking bird, and they love the land of dreams. They

sing only in the night, and that one is singing a dream song now."

"This is lovely," exclaimed our little boy with a sigh of pleasure. "I wish mother was here. She is so tired, and this would rest her."

"Yes, Roy, I have just been thinking that; and after you get home, she shall come. She has not been with us for a long time, and her eyes are heavy. She was too anxious about her little boy to enter this hall of rose-colour dreams; but before long she will come, and I will see that our birds sing sweetly to her, and we will send her back to you happy and rested."

So saying, the Queen passed on to the stairs and led Roy upward. He noticed that, while he was walking, he seemed also to float, and that the sensation was something like the motion of his boat on the Lake of Peace. "You shall see our nursery first," said his hostess, "for this was the place where your mother first saw you." So saying, she opened a door to a long, light room, so long that it seemed almost to have no ending.

The walls were of a creamy whiteness; the doors and wainscoting of mother-of-pearl, and the chairs and tables carved in white ivory. White velvet carpeted the floor, and white satin swayed at the windows; and everywhere were little, white cots and cradles, beautifully carved in mother-of-pearl. From one to another the Queen glided smilingly; and Roy tiptoed after her, with eyes wide with wonder. In most of the cots a tiny, wee baby lay sleeping. Little, pink hands were outstretched on the white bedspreads, and curly heads nestled in the pillows. They were all waiting to be some mother's dream children.

Coming at last to a little empty bed, the fairy turned and whispered, "There, Roy, years ago, with a hungry heart, your dear mother came and saw you. She loved you so that every night she came, and came again, and sat and watched you until one day you went away with her. I saw her kiss you, as I lingered in her room in your own home the day you were born; and as she did so, I heard her say to your father, 'Are you sure I 'm

not dreaming? It seems too good to be true.' And as he looked down upon you, nestling in her arms, he said, 'He 's a very substantial little dream, anyway'; but he did not know, as I did, how often she had seen you here, and how wonderful it was to her to see you with waking eyes in the land of 'is.'"

"Do all these babies go away as I did?" asked Roy. "No, there are some that stay here always. Their mothers long for them and love them, but cannot take them away. They are just little dream children always. Sometimes they grow bigger and play with their mothers and love them, and try to comfort them; but the mothers often cry when they go away, and the tears turn to pearls, and the babies make chains of them and wear them, and they are very precious and very beautiful."

Opening another door, she led Roy into a gorgeous apartment, the walls of which were hung with tapestries. Thick Turkish rugs were spread on the dark wood floors, and the electric lamps were shaded with globes wondrously

inlaid with rubies and emeralds. This room was filled with great, oak chests; and as the fairy touched them, they flew open, and showed piles and piles of gold and silver coins and precious gems of every sort. A heavy incense filled the air, and Roy was somewhat bewildered to know what there was here of interest, compared with the rose and white sweetness that he had left.

"This," said the fairy, "is the dream room that people visit who are hungry for wealth. They play here with the gold and jewels, and it makes some of them happy for a time; but when I have watched them in the waking world, I have noticed that it does not make them any more contented there; and altogether I would rather not have to unlock the door for them, but when they knock I cannot help it, for they receive in my country what their heart is the most set on in the other world."

Leading him out, she crossed a hall-way and opened another door. Turning, with a smile she said, "This is a brighter, better place, little boy." It was indeed. The prevailing

colour was blue, and such a blue! like the newly washed sky on an April day. The doors and window frames were of crystal, and the furniture of silver filigree. Clear, bright, bird notes rose and fell in a perfect ecstasy of song; and the scent of spring flowers was in the air.

"That 's a skylark singing; and if you will look up, you will see that the roof of this room has to be very, very high, for that little joy bird can only sing on the wing, and he is ever soaring upward and sending down his glad notes to the listeners below." Indeed, Roy could not see the roof at all, for as he looked up, there were only blue heights above and glistening lights as of diamond stars, that seemed to smile upon him.

Roy felt like singing too, he was so happy; and turning to his friend, he asked, "What do you call this room?" "Hope's Dreamland," she answered. "I have had your mother here once or twice since you were sick; and after you go home, I shall bring her here again, straight from the rose-coloured hall, for she needs to rest here, and tune her heart to the

song of my little bird. It will make her eyes bright again and her voice merry."

Through the silver and blue room, Roy followed his friend down a long flight of stairs, and wondered rather at seeing the light fade and strange violet-hued shadows surround them. The silvery laugh of the fairy at his side reassured him, as she said, "Now, Roy, you must not be afraid, for I am going to show you the dream dungeons under my palace, and there are strange things there that I have to keep sometimes, though I do not like them at all."

The stairs grew so dark that Roy stopped, and could go on only as the Dream Queen took his hand in hers. The next moment, she opened an iron door, and they entered a long corridor, bounded on either side by iron cages. In these cages were lions and tigers, snakes and spiders of awful size and shape; almost every living creature imaginable, but all of them so monstrous and grotesque that they looked uncanny. They had, moreover, the power to grow bigger and bigger, and then dwindle

away until your eyes strained in trying to keep track of them. Some of them groaned and roared, or cried and wailed; while others were frightfully silent and just gazed at you with great, staring eyes, until you wished they would make a noise and break the spell.

"Oh! what are these dreadful things?" Roy asked in a frightened whisper. "Nightmares," answered the Queen with a smile. "They generally visit the little boys that eat too much cake and candy, and go to the older folks who indulge in things that are not good for them too late at night. But come on; time is flying, and there is something I want you to see at the very end of the passage."

As they reached the last cage, Roy, looking in, saw some poor, mournful-looking, long-legged storks. Their plumage had been golden, but it looked dull. Their long necks drooped dejectedly. Behind them, leaning against the wall, were some pale pink roses, with faded leaves and withered petals. "Do you know them, Roy?" said the Queen. "I had to lock them up here because they teased you. The

storks are from your mother's Japanese screen, and the roses from the wall-paper. The former annoyed you by hopping and flapping their wings; and the latter you said made faces at you. Do you think, little boy, that you can forgive them?" "Indeed I can," said Roy heartily, "poor things! do let them go." "You shall do that," said the Dream Queen, and opening a door in the cage, she led him in. "Take this key," she said, "and open the door to your right. It will let them out into the sunshine." He did so, and in a moment the place was flooded with golden glory. Roy looked over the green valley and the blue hills beyond. "You may go home," he said to the storks. "All but one," added the Queen, "and take the roses with you." Thereupon, each stork stretched and flapped his wings, and picking up a pink rose, the petals and leaves of which had brightened and freshened under the sun's influence, they marched solemnly to the door. Then with an upward sweep of their wings they sailed away, their golden plumage gleaming in the sunshine.

"Now, little boy, there is one more place that you must visit, and then you too must fly away home." So saying, the fairy led him down a flight of marble steps into a marvellous greenhouse, where grew the wildest profusion of flowers. Roy noticed that the one stork that had been retained was marching along behind them, and he wondered whether his place on the screen would be a blank when he next looked at it from his little bed.

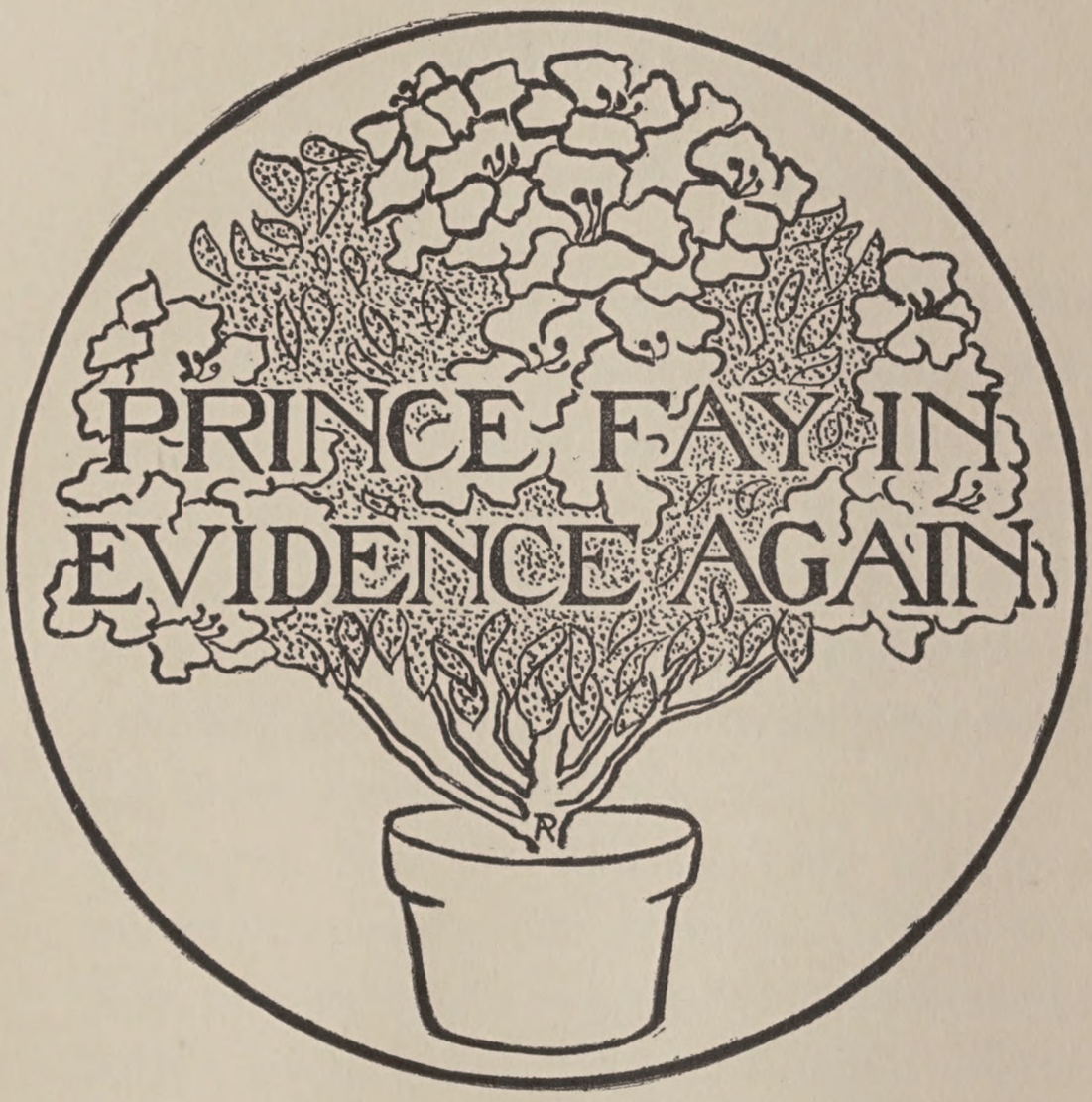
In the midst of the conservatory was a great shining pool of the clearest water, and there the Dream Queen stopped. "Roy," she said, "just as wide-awake people, when they shut their eyes and drift away to this fairy realm of mine, can see the things they want to see or are obliged to see, so there is one place here, where from the land of dreams you can look back at the waking world. What would you like most to see?" Unhesitatingly one word sprang to Roy's lips,—"Mother." The fairy smiled; "All right, little boy; you can have only one wish, but you have chosen well. Look down into the depth of the pool, and tell me what you see."

Roy obeyed, and as he gazed into the clear water it became cloudy, and then the cloud parted and rolled back on either side like two great curtains, and there he saw his mother. She was not lying asleep, as he expected, but was kneeling by the window of her room, praying. The light of the rising sun fell on her face, and it was white and troubled. Her lips moved and her eyes were closed, but from beneath the lashes tears fell, one after the other. As the sunlight touched them, Roy thought how the dream babies would like to catch them and string them as pearls; they looked so beautiful. Tears came to his own eyes, and turning to the fairy he said, "I want to go home to her." "All right, little Roy," she said, "it is a long journey, but the golden stork will carry you safely. Good-bye, and come again. You will always be welcome."

The next moment the great, glass doors of the greenhouse flew open before them; and Roy, between the outstretched golden wings, was sailing over valley and mountain, lake and plain, with the sweet, soft breeze fanning his cheeks. Now the stork was sinking slowly

but surely. What was that speck below them? Lower and lower they sank. Yes, it was a house surrounded by trees, with the first, soft tint of spring upon them. The big, green lawn spread out in front; and surely, yes surely, Roy recognised it. It was home.

A moment the golden wings paused outside the window, and Roy, looking in, saw his little bed; and could it be himself lying asleep on the pillow? The nurse sat in the chair. The doctor was mixing something in a glass on the table; and through the open door into the next room he could see his mother still praying. Sunshine was in the room. The lark's song was in his heart, and Roy laughed a merry, happy laugh, and with it he awoke.


PRINCE FAY IN
EVIDENCE AGAIN

CHAPTER X

PRINCE FAY IN EVIDENCE AGAIN

"MOTHER! Mother!" The little voice was weaker than when it sounded by the deep, still pool in Dreamland; but it was joyful and followed well that little, waking laugh. Need I say there was a quick rustle of skirts? And in a moment loving arms, the tenderest arms in the world to him, were round the little, weak, thin body.

Doctor Newton, looking over her head, smiled down at his little patient. "Well done, Roy, you 've slept away the fever; and waking with a laugh is a mighty good sign. Now I guess you 'll be getting hungry next." "I 'm hungry now," Roy answered; and then he whispered, "Mother, I 've been to the land of the dream fairies, and it 's lovely; but I saw you praying, and your tears were like pearls, and

I had to hurry back." "Yes, pet," she said, kissing him, "I know all about that lovely place. I prayed that you might sleep, and that your dreams might be sweet, for I knew if you did, you would wake up better."

And Roy was better, wonderfully better from that hour. At first he was very weak and often weary. The medicine tasted bad, and the bed made his little bones ache; but when he slept, it always did him good; and often he floated on white clouds in a blue sky, and heard the lark sing; and sometimes he lay on a rose-coloured one, and was carried by the storks to the gates of the sunset; while at other times he heard the music of the fountain, but they were only little scraps of dreams, and he could not recall them well on waking. Perhaps it was because he saw the light as he opened his eyes; for they say that that makes you forget all the wonders of Dreamland.

As his strength came back, he began to take a greater interest in life. He could see from the window that a tinge of green and red was on the trees, and he guessed that the birds he

loved would soon be home. "Mother," he asked one day, "are your bulbs coming up in the garden?" "Not yet, darling, but I soon expect to see their little, green heads pushing up under the leaves. I hope you will be up by the time that I have to uncover them." "I shall be so glad," he sighed. "I love them all, and I want to be out among them when they bloom; shall I?" "Yes, indeed you will," she answered, "and now I will go and see whether I cannot get something pretty from the greenhouse. I've been afraid to bring flowers to your room before, because you had such an aching little head that the doctor thought the fragrance would be too strong for you."

Turning at the door, his mother asked, "What would you like most?" "A white azalea," he answered, "is there one in bloom?" and then he smiled and hoped, oh! so ardently, that among the leaves he might catch sight of a tiny, green cap with a humming bird's feather stuck jauntily on one side.

Mother was called to the telephone almost as soon as she had told the gardener her errand,

so it was the old Irishman himself who tiptoed into the room with his wrinkled face all puckered into a smile, and a beautiful bloom-sovered bush in his arms. "Sure, and it 's myself that is glad to see you, Mister Roy," he said, putting it down on the table; "you 've been mighty sick, as they tell me; but it 's yourself as will be soon down teasing old John again. God bless your white, little soul." He had to feel his way out again, so dim were his old eyes with tears; and he quite forgot how he had of old grumbled at this same little boy when he was rosy and rollicking, and prone to leave the greenhouse doors open, for the sight of the pale face and thin, little hands tugged at his heartstrings, tough as they generally were.

When John was gone, Roy turned anxiously to the plant. He loved flowers, but there was something he wanted far more,—the merry comradeship of the fairy Prince. At first he saw nothing. Each white bud and flower gazed placidly up, but no little, green figure poised itself upon them. Had he lost the way

to Fairyland? Surely he had tried hard to be good and patient during these weary days of convalescence. He had swallowed Doctor Newton's medicine uncomplainingly. He had eaten what they said was good for him. He had tried to be thoughtful for mother; and though he had learned no lessons so far as books were concerned, nobody wanted him to, now that he was so sick.

Again he gazed at the plant. How could he tell that Prince Fay had ever made his home in this particular azalea? He might have been in any other of the several hundred plants that filled the greenhouse. Just at that moment something gleamed in the leaves and fell on the earth in the pot. It was a tiny, silver hunting horn. Yes, there was no mistaking it. Roy held his breath. Next he saw two little shoes waving vigorously from under the leaves, and then the Prince's green-capped figure sprang out onto the stem, and he let himself down very carefully, monkey fashion, until he stood on firm soil beside the silver horn, which he immediately picked up and dusted tenderly.

"Well, Roy," he said cheerily, "you have been a very sick little boy, and you came very near leaving earthland and fairyland behind you, and we have all been very anxious about you." "Have you?" Roy said. "Why, I did n't suppose you knew anything about it." "Did n't suppose I knew? Why, of course I did. My cousins, the dream fairies, used to give me news every night when I visited them; and if they had not, old John was always mumbling and grumbling about it over his flowers; and sometimes your mother would come by, and one look at her face always told the tale."

"Well, now you 've come, Prince Fay," said Roy, "I hope you will help amuse me; and whatever happens, don't go away again." "I can't promise that," said the fairy, bounding from the flower-pot to the top of the medicine bottle, and settling himself comfortably, Turk fashion, on top of the cork. "I must stay close to the white azalea. If they take it away at night, I go too; if not, I stay; but remember, Roy, with the first note of the bluebird the flower fairies will all be home, and I must get

THE·TRIM·LITTLE·FIGURE
MADE·A·MOST·ELABO—
RATE·BOW

out into the open and report to her most royal Highness, her Majesty the Queen."

Saying this, the trim little figure in green sprang up, and, with heels together, made the most elaborate bow and flourish, which bid fair to tumble him head first into the medicine glass, which happened to be half full of water at the time. So comical was the effort by which he saved himself, that Roy broke into peals of laughter; and the fact that Prince Fay sprang back to the pot, and climbed up the stem of the azalea in the most undignified fashion, only increased his irrepressible merriment.

Hearing this unusual sound from the sick room, his mother hurried in, and was surprised to find her little boy rolling among the pillows in the most hilarious state without apparent cause. "Oh, I was only laughing at a fairy friend of mine," said Roy, in answer to her questions; "I 'm all right. Please push the table near enough for me to touch the flowers, and I shall amuse myself quite happily for the next hour." Mother looked slightly anxious

and very puzzled. "I fear my darling is somewhat hysterical," she said, as she was leaving the room, "and I must not let him overtire himself on nurse's morning off, or she will think I have neglected our little patient."

When she was gone, Roy divided the flowers, and putting in his little, white hand, begged Prince Fay to appear again. "That 's a polite way to treat a friend," said he, with an attempt to look indignant, "to laugh at me in that manner, and then to call in your mother before I had time to make a dignified retreat." "I did n't call her, and she says I 'm hysterical. That is all the excuse I can give. Now come and sit on my bed and talk to me, and I promise not to laugh again."

Sitting on the palm of Roy's hand, the fairy allowed himself to be conveyed to the top of the snowy mountain made by his knees beneath the bedquilt. Sitting there enthroned, he began to talk of the coming spring. "You see, Roy," he said, "the first company of fairies to come are with the bluebirds. It is only rarely we travel with the robins, because there is

often frost and snow after their coming, and we would rather leave the field to the white armed knights until the sunshine is really warm. The next detachment comes with the orioles and thrushes, and the last with the humming birds, purple martins, and scarlet tanagers. The early season is a very busy one. First we have to attend to all the little shoots coming out of the brown earth. We straighten the crooked ones, rub off the earth with which they may be stained, and watch over them generally. You see, these spring flowers are the birthplaces of all the tiny, new fairies. Every tulip that opens its gay cup to the sunshine is a fairy cradle, and a little life is hidden in each curled-up narcissus bud."

"Oh!" cried Roy delightedly, "I would love to see them open; could I?" "Well, I don't know, little boy, I will ask the Queen. That is a question she alone can decide, and you would have to be out by sunrise on the great day. It may not be possible; still we 'll see, we 'll see." At this half promise, Roy was so delighted that he wiggled his toes, and

that meant an upheaval of the white mountain; and forthwith Prince Fay came tumbling down in a swift and undignified manner. Far from resenting this unexpected experience, he so enjoyed it that he climbed up repeatedly and slipped down, waving his feathered cap and shouting in his tiny, silvery voice with as much merriment as a schoolboy. The fairy laughter was, however, drowned by Roy's peals of merriment; and mother's return caused Prince Fay to vanish amid the flowers; while our little boy lay back on the pillow exhausted.

"My dearest child! I am coming to read to you, and I hope you will drop off to sleep, for you are far too weak to be so wild in your play. She moved the table away, and as she did so remarked, "I thought I saw a little mouse run across your bed as I came in, but it must have been a fancy." She tucked him in snugly, and then seated herself by his side to read. By degrees his eyelids drooped, and his little head settled more deeply in the pillow; and ere long the rhythm of mother's voice was

accompanied by the soft cadence of regular breathing. Roy was with the dream fairies again, and from the smile on his face, he must have been listening to the song of the skylark.

THE SONG OF
THE BLUEBIRD

CHAPTER XI

THE SONG OF THE BLUEBIRD

ROY had progressed so well that he was tucked up in mother's long, rattan, lounging chair at the window. He had on a warm eider-down robe and slippers, and a big pile of pillows propped him to a height from which he could see the nearby flower-beds, and beneath the terrace and long strip of lawn. There was not much to see in the flower-beds, for they were still covered with brown leaves and brush-wood; but the lawn was of a beautiful, tender, spring green.

"It is really spring at last," he exclaimed with a deep sigh of relief. On the table close at hand was his beloved white azalea and a field glass. He had been using the latter to watch the fat, grey juncos who had settled in a flock on the lawn, and were industriously

picking away for their dinner in the soft, damp turf. The sheen of the feathers on their backs caught the sunlight every now and then, and made them shine like satin; and the constant soft twitter of content, with which they accomplished their work, sounded like bubbling water. Every now and then a robin's note called from the trees, and here and there an early butterfly, tempted from its narrow bed by the sunshine, fluttered near the window like a helmless, breeze-blown piece of paper.

Roy's mother was tidying the room before going out; and, as the nurse had left some days before, Roy was to amuse himself, as he seemed well able to do these days. "Really, my pet," mother said, as she kissed him good-bye, "if your illness has done nothing else for you, it has taught you to be contented. You never, when I leave you alone now, send me away with those words 'I don't know what to play at' ringing in my ears. Yes," she added with a smile, "I know what you say has helped you. Weave all the fairy stories you like as long as you are happy. I don't fear

the influence of the little people that live with the flowers. Chat away to yourself, and if it gets cold," she finished, "ring the bell and have the window shut."

Just as she reached the top of the stairs, she heard him call to her. Roy had a trick of doing this. He always remembered what he wanted after his mother had left the room. She returned, however, very willingly, and he said: "Mother, there is one thing I wish you would do. Tell John to fill the big pan I used last year for the robins, and put it down by the rose arbour, where I can watch them take their bath. It will be such fun." Then mother was allowed to go without recall.

A few minutes later, John was hobbling over the lawn with a big, deep dish of water, and from that moment Roy's eyes were centred upon it. For some time he knew he must amuse himself alone. Prince Fay had been telling him stories that morning; in fact he began quite early, long before mother, in the next room, was awake; and when Roy's breakfast tray was heard jingling on the

stairs, he had withdrawn to the seclusion of his blossom-roofed bower to have his sleep out. There was important business, he announced, that he must talk over with the dream fairies, so Roy must not wake him on any account.

Before the birds' bath was put in place, Roy had curiously peeped between the flowers, and had seen the fairy fast asleep in a half-open bud, which seemed to tuck him in like a snowy white coverlet. Now Prince Fay could sleep on all he wanted to, for the robins and blue-jays seemed to be having a circus for Roy's edification. He could not tell which family had discovered the bath first, but both parties were loudly insisting on their prior claims.

One fat robin was sitting in the middle of the bath, splashing with vigor, while his mate stood by shouting at two jays who sat on the arbour just above, and they were screaming angrily and flashing their glorious, blue wings, in the sunshine. One presently dropped to the ground, and Roy expected to see him attack the bathers, for both robins were now making the water fly in crystal showers to right and

left. The blue-jay had such a formidable beak and such a definite challenge in his voice, that one naturally would think that he, especially where there were two of him, could make robins' feathers fly.

To Roy's surprise, his jay-ship hopped nearer and nearer, and then deliberately squatted on the turf under the shower of dewdrops and flapped his wings and tail with evident satisfaction at getting at least a second-hand bath. Perhaps some lazy streak in his nature made him prefer a shower-bath to one in which he would have to use his own energies. Anyway, this happy arrangement seemed to please both parties. Blue-jay Number Two followed his companion, and humbly accepted the sprinkling cast his way.

All at once, however, there was a flash of blue wings and brown, and the quartette had scattered, calling and scolding, in different directions. Was it Bluette, the big Angora cat, lurking in the shade of the fir trees? Or had some footstep sounded on the path? No, they had simply been turned out by new

enemies, and they were only a trio of pugnacious, little, English sparrows, who hopped in and out of the bath and chattered, fluttered and plumed themselves, certain beyond a doubt that the bath was placed there for them, and for them alone.

Roy was very wroth. "Miserable, conceited, little things," he shouted, "they have spoiled all the fun, and I never meant it for them at all." There was nothing handy to throw at them, and he could hardly have reached the arbour if there had been a convenient missile; though to allow them to enjoy their stolen bath in peace was beyond endurance. Raising himself to the window ledge, he looked below with the hope that John might be there; and then he noticed Tiny, his beloved little black-and-tan, spread out blissfully asleep on the stone walk, getting nicely baked in the sun.

Ever since Roy was quarantined, Tiny had been kept away from him; and all the other members of the family had been hurriedly sent away. The loving, little dog had been greatly distressed, and the marks on Roy's door still

ANOTHER·LITTLE·FIGURE
BETWEEN·THE·WINGS·

showed where she had scratched and begged to be let in to him. Now she would sit hours at a time under the window, with her absurd, little tail wagging her whole body with the pure delight of hearing his voice again.

Here was an instrument ready to his hand. "Tiny! Tiny!" he called. The little, black body sprang to attention as if a current of electricity had passed through it, and the intelligent, little face was all love and worship. "Sic 'em, Tiny, sic 'em," came the command. Of course she would. Why, she was ready to sic anything on earth if it would please her little master; so she rushed off, wildly barking. She had not the slightest idea in her little, black head as to what she was to sic, but she charged down the lawn as affording the longest run and the greatest scope for energy.

There she beheld a flock of peaceful juncos, and charged them wildly, for surely they were what Roy meant. Having chased the last, departing shadow with ear-splitting barks, she returned in triumph to be applauded. "Little goose," was all her master said, and she

settled down panting and hoping for some kinder word of praise.

The general confusion had stopped the sparrows' bath, but now they were at it again, reinforced by two more of their numerous family. "Sic 'em," shouted Roy again, gesticulating violently in the right direction. Tiny, up again quivering and whining, scanned the garden for something; anything that could possibly be chased. Unfortunately her eyes fell on Hannibal, the big, white rooster, who was majestically and solemnly leading a bevy of hens into the grove beyond the croquet lawn, where he had discovered and uncovered, by the use of his spurs, a delightful scratching ground.

This surely was the foe that Roy desired to put to flight. No doubt remained, so, with a yelp of triumph, Tiny shot away with an energy that sent her flying over the lawn like a streak of black lightning. Great was the havoc she caused. Hannibal fled squawking; while his wives scattered in every direction, flying over the ground with wings flapping, legs trailing, and necks elongated.

John, who had suddenly appeared from somewhere, followed, gesticulating with his broom, and calling Tiny a list of uncomplimentary names that the poor, little creature did not at all understand, though the tone of voice made her retire to the shadow of Roy's window, with her poor, little body cringing to the earth and her tail made as well-nigh invisible as possible. She looked pleadingly up, and spat out two of Hannibal's white tail feathers with a look that said pathetically, "Master, I did try to please you"; and Roy had to say, "Poor doggy" in answer to the plea, which kind greeting set her tail to wagging and brought back a look of ecstasy to her intelligent little face.

Roy felt himself rather tired, for shouting commands to a wildly excited dog was not the wisest occupation for an invalid. Sinking back into his chair, he let the sense of the sweetness and warmth of the air steal over him, and spread out his thin, little, white hands to a warm, yellow sunbeam that fell across his lap. As he lay and watched some lazy, fleecy white,

clouds creep slowly along across the sapphire blue sky, he heard a distant bird call, that thrilled him strangely, and made his drowsy eyes fly wide open. Was it, could it be, the voice of the bluebird?

Some one else had heard it. However far away Prince Fay had travelled with the Dreamland fairies, that sound of all others was the one to bring him back. In a moment he had sprung from the shelter of the white blossoms, and, with an elasticity that Roy did not know he possessed, landed with one bound on the window-sill. His little, green-clad figure was quivering with excitement. Drawn up to his full height, with his shoulders squared and his cavalier cloak thrown back, he looked every inch a prince, tiny as he was.

"Roy! Roy!" he cried, his face alight, his voice vibrant with joy, "they are coming; they are coming. I heard, and soon you shall hear and see my people, of whom I have talked so often, and for whom I have watched so long." Roy leaned forward, eager to watch with his friend for the coming host; and then all at

once the flash of light blue wings and rose-tinted breasts seemed everywhere. Bluebirds in the fir trees; bluebirds on the rose vines; bluebirds flitting from branch to branch in the great tulip trees; some silent as blue shadows; others winging away with the sun on their brilliant feathers, giving forth a clear, sweet call; and then close beside him another call rang out. It was Prince Fay's silver hunting horn, clear and sweet, but so insistent that it seemed to dominate all other sounds.

A passing bluebird swerved in its course, as if checked and redirected by some unseen hand, and in a moment it was perched on the window-sill. Then Roy saw that another little figure had sprung from between the outspread wings. He was about the Prince's size, but dressed in pale blue velvet, almost the colour of the bird he rode. The shoulder cape was lined with palest rose colour, and a cluster of pink pearls held in place the blue feather in his cap.

"My dear Fay," he cried, "what a joyful surprise! Where have you been hiding your-

self? Your cheery voice and the sound of your silver horn have been sadly missed by your comrades at court and in the field." His friend's answer Roy could not catch; but as he stood watching the two gorgeous, little figures, standing with clasped hands in eager converse, he noticed the bird, that still stood motionless, regarding him with terror in its bright, black eyes, and he could note the beating of its frightened heart beneath the rose-flushed feathers on its breast. The fairy visitor must have noticed it too, for he touched the bird with a reassuring hand and looked across at Roy with a smile, as Prince Fay waved his hand in adieu. "Good-bye, dear little friend," he cried; "I must away to the forest, where the fairies meet to-night, but I shall come again, never fear; and if you remember the road to Fairy-land and watch well the birds, butterflies, and flowers, you are bound to see us often through spring days and summer nights. Farewell, farewell."

A flash of blue wings, and the two, little figures were gone. The flight of bluebirds that

had rested in the trees of Roy's garden had flitted off to the silent shade of the forest, and a sense of loneliness crept into the little boy's heart. Laying his head on the window-sill, he sobbed aloud; and faithful Tiny, hearing him, howled in distress unison from the garden below.

"Up too long and tired out, my poor, little boy," said mother, entering the room a few minutes later. "See who has come to comfort you." And Roy felt a cold, little nose and a warm little tongue against his hand. The next moment the loving, little dog was hugged close in his arms, and he was whispering in her fawn-like ears: "You won't go away and leave me, will you, Tiny? You are the kind of friend to have. I 'll never, never let them take you away from me again."

THE MARSH KING'S CONCERT

CHAPTER XII

THE MARSH KING'S CONCERT

THAT night, as Roy lay awake in the moonlit room, he heard the frogs peep for the first time, and he knew that spring had really come at last. What a joyous, soothing, musical note it is—that rolling, throbbing, pleading call of the night! Tiny lay sleeping in Roy's arms. Mother had not had the heart to separate them that first night of their reunion, and determined that she would dig the dog out of her little nest after Roy was fast asleep.

Tiny was so perfectly happy that she slept soundly, and when that was the case, she had a not altogether musical way of breathing. This interrupted Roy's enjoyment of the frog symphony, so he shook her gently once or

twice, but at each shaking she cuddled down a little closer and tucked her nose more snugly under his arm. What can't be cured must be endured; so he let her snore bass to the frogs' high treble; and in time the regular alternation of sounds made him drowsy, and fixing his eyes on a long, pale streak of moonlight, he became conscious of a delicious feeling of rest and peace stealing through every fibre of his body.

Were his eyes deceiving him, or was that the Queen of his Dreamland visit gliding down the path of silver light? Her gown was of the softest, filmy white, and might have been the work of spider weavers. One great, white jewel shone like a star in her raven hair, and a girdle of moonstones gleamed softly around her waist. She had really come to him. Prince Fay might prove faithless and fly away at the first chance to rejoin his comrades of the greenwood; but this dear fairy of dreams would never desert him, he could see *that* in her smiling eyes as she came towards him with outstretched hands.

"Poor little Roy! These days are long and tedious, are they not?" she said sympathetically, "but it is lovely, balmy night, and I have come to help you make the most of it. Make haste and dress, and we will be off together into the outside, moonlit world."
"Mother would not like it, I 'm afraid," said Roy, hesitating. "Oh, yes, she would, because we will leave the tired, little body safe in bed with Tiny, and take only the little, dream boy away."

Roy did not understand the remark, but he felt great confidence in the queenly little figure before him; and knew also that she was a close friend of his mother's, for had he not slept himself in one of those pearly white cradles in her palace before his mother took him away? The moment he put his feet to the floor, he found he was fully dressed; and as soon as he touched the streak of moonlight, he saw that he had shrunk to fairy size, and he had to look up to catch the smile from the fairy face of the beautiful, stately figure at his side.

"Come," she said, and she took his hand, and together they began to descend a long flight of silvery steps. "I did not see these at first," said Roy, "I thought it was just a moonbeam." "Yes," said the Queen, smiling, "your sight was not quite adjusted then to Dreamland perspective. It is wonderful how different things look to what they are when one comes to see clearly. Would you like to know where we are going?" "Yes," said Roy, but added contentedly and gallantly, "I really don't care at all as long as you are with me." "Why, little Roy, you would make quite a courtier, but all the same I will tell you. You heard the frogs singing. Well, it is their first concert of the year, and my little people are going to a ball out in the Marsh King's palace, and they expect to have quite a gay time of it."

"I can't dance," said Roy, rather defiantly. "Mother does n't care for me to learn, and says that I can get through life without it." "Yes, I know, Roy, and quite right she is, but you see you are not a fairy. Fairies have

THEY·FLOATED·AWAY·IN THE·MOONLIGHT

to dance like butterflies or sunbeams, or the sparkles on the water. To them it is not something artificially taught them; it is nature. But come; here are our steeds, and we must fly far and fast to be there on time."

As she spoke, she had thrown open a massive, silver gate that stood at the foot of the steps, and Roy looked out on a beautiful, moonlit country. No horses were in evidence, but he heard a soft flap of wings, and in a moment saw two, velvety, white moths alight in front of them. After riding the golden stork, and seeing Prince Fay's friend alight from the back of a bluebird, this seemed no very extraordinary thing to our little wanderer in Fairy-land. So Roy was mounted, almost as quickly as the Queen, and they floated away into the moonlight.

The air was soft and balmy, and full of that sweet fragrance of moss and fern and growing things that only exhales from the forest at night. Sometimes they passed through dark, shadowy pines, mysterious and solemn in their might and majesty. Sometimes they looked

down on silvery, winding rivers and peaceful, sleeping lakes; but everywhere a sweet, soft music seemed to sigh and swell around them.

All at once they saw, at the end of an avenue of trees, an illumination so bright that it made the moonlight pale and ghostly. A nearer view showed it to be a palace, or rather a pavilion, for it was all roof and colonnades, with no obscuring walls to shut in the light. Another moment, and Roy was mounting its steps with the Queen's hand resting lightly on his shoulder. The steps seemed to be of some rare, green marble, and the wondrous columns and pillars were of the same, but around them a golden design of *fleur-de-lis* was most gracefully entwined. The balconies and inside staircase were all of gold, and the effect was gorgeous beneath the thousands of tiny electric lights.

The floor of the pavilion was of a clear, white crystal, but the whole centre of the hall was depressed to form a big pool, into which a merry, little stream was flowing, crossed at the back, where it entered, by several, little, golden

bridges. Over the margin of the pool drooped ferns, and in the centre moss-covered rocks had been arranged so as to form an orchestra, and there were seated the players and singers.

Amid all this beauty, they were just common every-day frogs. That could not be said, however, of the Marsh King, for he was most majestic in size, and his golden eyes were like jewels. He was distinguished from his court, moreover, by his crown, which was of fine gold filigree, with some magnificent emeralds gleaming in the delicate setting. His efforts to rise and bow gracefully to the Dream Queen were very funny, but she acknowledged them with a graceful wave of her hand, and cried merrily: "Don't let my presence disturb you in the least, your Majesty. I can stay but a short while, and I will watch my little people enjoy themselves, while we listen to your superb band."

As she turned away, some signal must have been given, for in a moment the air vibrated with sound—rising, swelling, throbbing, shrilling, and then blending in the most wonderful

harmony. Roy was overwhelmed. Seating himself on the leaf of a water-lily that grew at the border of the great, clear pool, he listened and watched, and he found there was soon much to see. Out of the shadowy night world into the zone of brilliant light, trooped, sailed, or glided the dream fairies. They were all of them airy and graceful. Their clothing was light and filmy as gossamer, and for colours they might have been robbing the rainbow.

When seen out in the night they all looked white in the moonlight, but as soon as they entered the hall, the beauty and variety of colour were seen. For jewels they all seemed to prefer the diamond, opal, or moonstone; in fact, Roy could see no others worn, and concluded that it was in honour of the dewy hour or locality of their gathering place. Their laughter was low and musical, of the same tone as all fairy laughter he had heard; and when they chattered gayly, it was not like human chatter—a wearying, deafening sound—but soothing like the peal of far-away bells.

Then they danced, and that was dancing

indeed. The Queen had said it was nature, and Roy agreed with her. He had sometimes watched the motes in a sunbeam dancing, when a ray of golden light forced its way through a half-closed shutter; and he had often looked out on the summer sea when it was covered with what a poet once called "the merry, twinkling smile of ocean." Well, that was how these dream fairies danced over the crystal floor, away into the sweet-scented shadows and back again. They were kindly, little people too, and they did not make Roy feel like a stranger, for one and all smiled at him as they passed.

He had no notion of the time; he was too absorbed and occupied. He was surprised when he became aware of the fact that his beautiful Dream Queen was smiling down upon him. He had almost forgotten her in the absorption of the scene before him. "Good-bye, Roy," she said, "I must go. My little people have much work to do yet. It cannot be all play for them any night, and half of them have gone already to drive the night-mares home and lock them up."

As she was gliding away, Roy turned to follow, but he could not rise, and so he called out desperately, "Do stop! How on earth am I to get home without you?" "Oh, that will be all right," she answered with a smile, "only do not be frightened. I will not let any of the nightmares catch you." Then she passed into the moonlight and disappeared.

The music had grown very soft and low. The fairies were dancing slower and slower; and Roy noticed that as they glided into the shadows, they did not return. Soon they were all gone; not a foot-fall rang on the crystal floor; he was alone. No, the frogs must be there, though the music had grown very faint. Turning, he saw that the musicians were most of them sleeping, and that the old Marsh King himself was so fast asleep that his crown had tilted over one eye and he looked most dissipated and rakish.

Then the lights began to fade out, and a little frog close to Roy climbed up on his lily pad, and nestled up close beside him for company. In the hall it grew darker and darker,

but out beyond, the light of dawn was breaking. How close that little frog was cuddling! Why, his cold nose was touching Roy's face, and the sun's light was growing brighter and brighter. It looked now as if it were coming through a window. Surely that was a window, and what was the sound close beside him? Frogs can't whine.

Roy was rubbing his eyes now, and with the dream films cleared away, he saw his own little room, his white bed, and the frog—where was he? Why, he had vanished, and Tiny was pleading for a kiss of recognition.

NEW PRINCES
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CHAPTER XIII

NEW PRINCES ARE INTRODUCED

IT was a bright, sweet, balmy morning. Roy felt so much better that he longed to get up and dress; but he knew that mother would not approve of that, as she wished him to progress slowly, so that his recovery might be steady, and no relapse might endanger the little life so precious to her. He did not think, however, that she would mind his taking just one peep into the sun-kissed, dewy garden, where Spring's green footsteps became more distinct each day.

Tiptoeing into mother's room, he took his field-glass from the rattan lounge, and putting on slippers and eider-down robe, he opened the window softly for a breath of fresh air. It really seemed as if the change from

barrenness to vendure had come in a night. What wondrous powers had been at work? The lovely, pale greens, reds, and pinks fairly clothed the trees, so long brown and naked. A dewy mist hung low over the grass. Long rays of golden light shot up from behind the distant city, that stood out like a line of grey and purple fortresses on the far-off horizon; and the great, fiery rim of the sun himself glowed behind the spruce tree, with an ardour that made Roy see green disks wherever he looked, after gazing upon the rising glory.

Softly and cheerily bird notes trilled up to him from the trees and shrubs; while on the lawn crowds of robins hopped with their peculiar, little hurrying step, which brings them up short every few minutes, like a mechanical toy gone wrong. "I wonder," said Roy to himself, "if the touch of fairy fingers brought those buds out so swiftly." Then, as no answer came to his thoughts, he focussed his field-glass, that he might watch the robins breakfast-hunting.

There was one big fellow, with his head on

one side, listening intently. Could it be that his ear was so finely attuned to sound as to catch the movement of the long, lithe body gliding along some hidden passage beneath the turf? Listening changed in a moment to action; an instantaneous peck, and now the big fellow was braced for a tug of war, and the worm that he held was firmly resistent, clinging to its earthy retreat with might and main. Tug, tug, hop, hop, shake, shake! What energy that robin had! and yet the worm held out. Force failing, the robin next tried strategy; and pretending to loosen his hold, in a moment the unsuspecting earth-worm yielded, so that he might gather himself together for the final effort and disappear below; but, before he knew what had happened, he was sent flying skyward, and fell to the grass only to be cut by a sharp beak, and devoured in two gulps by his clever antagonist.

A flutter of wings at the window caused Roy to lower his glass and look nearer at hand. A blue-jay, with wings outstretched, sailed by like a flash, uttering the discordant cry that

is the note of warning to the forest folk. Roy expected to see him fly to the birds' bath close to the rustic seat near the fir tree, which was a favorite rendezvous of all his feathered friends; but the bird made a swift circle and fluttered back to the window-sill, as though turned and guided by an unseen hand.

Roy's heart beat fast, and a joyous cry almost startled the blue-jay into flight again, as he saw a tiny, blue-clad figure slip from the smooth back of the bird to stand bowing with courtly grace close to his own outstretched hand. Yes, there could be no doubt of it; he was looking into Fairy-land again. His first thought was to pinch himself and wink his eyes very fast, to see if he was really awake; and a silvery laugh told that his thoughts had been read by his new, fairy friend.

For a moment Roy was abashed and mortified. It was all very well for Prince Fay to laugh at him; they were long-time friends, and he too could laugh at the little fairy's expense; but here was a stranger, who had not even been introduced, making fun of him at the

onset of their acquaintance. An unwonted cloud settled on Roy's face, and he fixed his eyes intently on the distant treetops, with the intention of utterly ignoring the little blue figure. A flap of wings, a sharp discordant cry, and the blue-jay was away among the fir trees, evidently glad to put distance between them.

Quick remorse followed Roy's momentary irritation. What a pity he had been so ungracious! The fairy had gone, and now once more the golden gates into that wonderful world were closed before him. His eager eyes were straining to penetrate the shades of the fir trees, with the hope that the little, blue figure might guide back his unwilling, feathered steed; and it never occurred to him to look down at the window-sill, where the bird had alighted a moment before.

Had he done so, he would have seen a brilliant, little figure sitting cross-legged close to his listless hand, and turning a merry face and very bright eyes up to his own disappointed and far-away gaze. The little creat-

ure was clad in darkest blue velvet. His girdle and sword hilt were resplendent with sapphires; his fair curls crowned with a dark cavalier hat, the white plumes of which gave the only light touch to a richly, sombre dress.

Springing to his feet, he put one spurred foot on Roy's little finger, preparatory to climbing the back of his doubled-up hand. The touch brought Roy quickly back from the distance, and with a sigh of delighted relief, he exclaimed: "So you are there still. I thought you had flown away." "My dear little boy, I can't fly," was the answer. "You are rather mixed up in your expressions, I fear. When you travel on a train, do you speak of yourself as steaming? My bird does the flying, and I have sent him away because my business was with you; and the foolish jay was panic-stricken at your size. Besides that, you know the jay is a very inquisitive and a very talkative bird; and he might spread the news which is intended only for your own ears."

"Well, I 'm glad you stayed, anyhow," said Roy, with unmistakable cordiality, "and now

ROY·SAW·AN·ARMY·OF
BUSY·WORKERS

please tell me who you are, and what message you bring to me." Very deliberately the fairy climbed finger after finger until he stood on the top of Roy's closed fist; and then he swung his hat from his head with a most courtly bow, and said, "Prince Featherweight, at your service, chief friend and messenger of Prince Fay, who is now a special equerry to her most Royal Highness, the Queen." "Hurrah!" cried Roy, and waved his free hand triumphantly, "I 'm so glad he has not forgotten me. I have missed him so much, and I was almost afraid that I had said 'Good-bye' to him forever. But what is the message, and why could he not come himself?"

"To answer your last question first, the reason should be plain enough. The chief equerry of our fairy Queen cannot go running away to visit little boys; and to satisfy your curiosity will be simple, for this is all Prince Fay said to me:—'Go to my dear little Roy, and tell him that the fairies are busily at work, and now is the time to watch for them. Take him to see the gathering of Prince Russet's

regiment this morning; and before you leave him, promise in my name that he shall see the baby fairies in their flower cradles, and shall be bidden to the wedding of his friends the Princess Firelight and the White Prince.' "

Roy was too happy to answer this proclamation delivered in most ornate style, with every courtly flourish that the graceful, little figure could execute. " When may I go with you? " he gasped at last. " Now, if you will. I can take you on my own steed, if you are willing to become fairylike; or you can run down stairs and unlock the front door, and I 'll meet you out on the lawn." Roy was about to accept the last offer, when he thought of mother. The grass was dewy; the morning air fresh. What would she say to her little invalid slipping out without leave, and especially in attire consisting of slippers and dressing gown only?

For a moment he hesitated. Oh! surely a fairy trip could hurt no one, and yet his little heart said loudly: " Think of mother. What would she wish? " It was a sad and somewhat

choking, little voice that answered: " O, Prince Featherweight, I am so, so sorry, but I can't come. I 've been very sick, you know, and mother would not like it. Though she has not said I must n't go, I know she would say it if I asked, so I 'll have to give it up." " That is a pity," answered the fairy, " I wonder Fay did not think of that. I guess I 'll have to ride away and get the aid of another friend of ours, who alone can get us over this difficulty."

The clear call of a silvery, hunting horn followed these words. There was again a flash of grey and blue, and once more the jay had vanished amid the dark green of the fir trees, but this time he bore on his outstretched wings the graceful, commanding, little figure of his princely master.

Poor Roy! As he saw the gate of Fairy-land shut before him, he threw aside wrapper and slippers and crept back into bed. Pulling up the sheets and blankets, he covered his head, that the bitter sobs of disappointment might not be heard, but there was some one who did hear. Tiny crept out of the basket beneath

Roy's bed, and sprang lightly onto the snowy coverlet. She scratched at the top where the opening of admittance ought to be.

Roy's tight grasp on the bedclothes relaxed, and Tiny found space to poke in an inquiring nose. The opening grew more encouraging, and Tiny's little tan-coloured paws enlarged it enough for the loving dog eyes to see a tear-stained little face. That was enough. With a look of humblest repentance for all the sins she might have committed, Tiny began to kiss the wet cheeks of her beloved master; taking, as she always seemed to take, all the blame for Roy's unhappiness.

In a moment the coverings were thrown back, and the little, black dog was pulled in to nestle in the child's encircling arms; and by and by so still were they both that you might have fancied, by the light and regular rise and fall of the coverlet, that they were sound asleep. Had you suggested this to Roy, however, he would have indignantly denied the impeachment. With his chin resting on one of Tiny's soft, silky ears, he lay thinking of the beauty

of the garden and of the free, happy birds, whose morning songs he could still hear; and above all, of the busy fairies whose company he had been bidden to join, and from whom he had had to turn away.

Perhaps his thoughts were growing a little hazy, for as he peeped from over the coverlet, he thought he saw the golden stork on the screen wink at him. He looked again, and that extraordinary bird was yawning and stretching his wings, and the next moment he had hopped down and was striding across the floor in a path made by a long pencil of golden sunlight. "Well, well, well!" he exclaimed, "great thing, that wireless telegraphy. I was sound asleep after a heavy night's work, when 'click, click, click,' it woke me up, and the Dream Queen's chief lord in waiting was sending a special call for me to hurry up and take you out to see the garden fairies at work."

It did not take Roy a moment to tumble out of bed, and when he touched the floor, he realised that he was of fairy proportions once more, for he could not touch the stork's back

even by standing on tiptoe and stretching up ever so far. In camel fashion, the big bird stooped to let him mount, and then it was that Roy noticed that Tiny, also of fairy size, was at his feet, wagging a very wee stump of a tail and begging with eager eyes to go too. Taking the doggy up quickly, he placed her in front of him on the flat, golden back of the bird, who the next moment was striding swiftly down the golden path to the window. With an upward spring it had reached the sill, and then was out in the soft, spring air, sailing lightly as a feather down, down, down, to the green lawn that spread out like a great, velvet carpet below them.

When their golden steed landed, Roy and Tiny slipped to the ground, and found Prince Featherweight at their side. "Go home," he ordered, as the big bird scraped and bowed in a somewhat stiff and stalky fashion, "I can see you are nearly asleep now. It is unusual for the dream fairies to use him, except during the dark hours," he added to Roy, "and I believe he had a busy time of it last night, carry-

ing down some much-wanted dream babies; so we will send him home, and then no one will chance to see the empty place on the Japanese screen."

Roy watched the flight of the swift, regularly beating wings, gleaming like burnished gold in the sunlight; and he sighed with the sheer pleasure of the beauty of the hour and scene. Was there ever such a perfect, spring morning? "Come! Come!" cried his new friend, "if you are to see anything, we must hurry up, for it is getting late; and the Prince, who is in charge to-day, will be off to the forest in half an hour, and he is especially noted for his punctuality."

The lawn now seemed to Roy of such immense proportions that he was not surprised that Prince Featherweight preferred to ride than to journey on foot. A shrill note on his bugle brought a swift sweep of blue wings, and another summoned the bird's mate, so that in less time than it takes to tell it, Roy was again mounted; and with Tiny before him, as eager and excited as himself, followed the

Prince's lead over long stretches of green plain, toward what looked like brown hillocks in the distance.

When their destination was reached, however, he found that these must be mother's flower-beds, in which she had planted with so much care hundreds of little brown bulbs. Papa always laughed at her for her enthusiasm over bulbs. When he came upon her reading Henderson's fall catalogues, he would say, "O dear! Mother has got the bulb craze again," and he would groan whenever the question was mentioned and pretend he must hide his check book, and make all sorts of naughty, teasing remarks.

After the planting of the bulbs came the gathering of piles of dried leaves to cover them; and then, over all, branches of brushwood to keep the leaves from blowing away. On the very top of one of these beds the blue-jays left their riders, and Roy, somewhat out of breath and full of wonder, gazed down the hill slope below him, and saw on every side an army of busy workers. They were fairies,

sure enough, but not the fairies of velvet cloaks, jewelled swords, and diamond-buckled shoes.

Every tiny figure was clad in russet brown from the little round cap to the neat, brown shoes. So like the leaves did they appear, that had they stood perfectly still, their presence would not have been detected. The sound of their merry laughter as they worked, seemed as much a part of the sweet, spring air as the sound of the birds; and the smile on their happy faces, their bright eyes, and soft, golden brown hair, seemed akin to the early sunshine.

Roy and Tiny were so absorbed watching these tiny workers, that they did not see the princely figure that had approached Prince Featherweight; and it was not until his arm was taken and a friendly shake administered, that Roy turned to hear his friend saying, "Let me introduce you to Prince Russet, who is another special friend of our mutual friend, Fay; and a very good fellow I can assure you, though he has such a reputation for hard work."

The Prince thus introduced laughed gayly. "My dear Featherweight," he said, "work, when one's whole heart is in the undertaking and when the work is rightly done, is full of enjoyment; and I tell you we have plenty of frolic and fun where other people seem to think there could be but toil."

Roy, who had clasped the outstretched hand cordially, looked up with admiration at the lithe, gallant figure that rose majestically above him. He knew that this princeling was only about the height of Prince Fay, and that when he was out of Fairy-land, he could comfortably seat both fairies on the palm of his hand, and have room for half a dozen more of the same size; but now he was small enough to see him as his followers did.

The Prince's dress, though of the same brown tints and shades as those his followers wore, was of velvet, and a soft, brown plume waved in his cap. The jewel that held it was an opal, translucent as a dewdrop and showing all the soft hues of a fading rainbow. Another gem of the same beauty clasped his gir-

dle, and yet another buckled the cloak that fell gracefully back from his shoulders. Roy, who had a keenly artistic eye, was charmed with the taste and harmony of colouring.

"Come," said the Prince, "if you would understand our labours of this morning, I must show you my people working, and explain what they have accomplished." From group to group of busy workers, Roy followed his friends. He saw that with sword and spear they were cutting the dead leaves, and here and there hacking with might and main at some branch of brush-wood, that seemed to be somehow in the way.

"But what is it all for? Why must they split the leaves and cut the branches?"—"Because, my dear little boy, something wants to come through to the sunlight; and if you will peep into each hole or opening they have made, you will see a green head peeping out, ever so glad that it can now grow up straight, instead of bending over crooked, or staying down there doubled up altogether."

Down into the caverns on the hillside Roy

peered eagerly, and in every one a green head or spear pointed upward toward the light. Some of them that had been bent and crooked were stretching themselves as a tall man would, who has been stooping in a vault where he was unable to stand upright.

"Why!" he exclaimed with a gasp, after a long pause for thought, "they must be mother's bulbs." "Yes," said the Prince, with a laugh, "this is the yellow tulip bed, but your mother did not know how well advanced the spring was, and she has not uncovered them quite early enough. Now, when she sees the green heads showing through the slits and holes we have made, she will come to their rescue and have all the old leaves and branches removed."

"That 's very kind of you, I am sure, said Roy, "I will tell her; I 'm sure she will be very much obliged." "My dear little boy," said the Prince, "if you do, I will tell you just what she will say:—'Why, my darling, you 've been dreaming!'" Seeing that Roy looked a little crestfallen, he added, "But I

will tell you one of the reasons we take so much trouble with the tulips. They are fairy cradles, and in each one a dear, little baby sleeps. By and by the great day will come when they will be opened, and we shall carry away the new babies to our Queen."

"Oh!" exclaimed Roy, "will you not let me know? I must be there,"—"We will ask Prince Fay about it, and as he has already taken your petition to the Queen, you will probably receive an answer telling you the exact day, and then you will be allowed to see what no little mortal has ever seen before."

So saying, both Princes turned and looked up at the house, which loomed above them like a tremendous, rocky mountain. A thin column of smoke circled lazily into the air, and soon a shutter was thrown back with a bang. Tiny gave a little bark of recognition, as down towards them floated the golden stork. His eyes were shut, his wings flapping lazily; and as Roy climbed on his back, he heard him muttering in a sleepy tone, "Bother that wireless telegraphy; I hear it even in my dreams."

Up, up, through the clear air; in over the window-sill; across the room, and then—oh! wretched old stork! how could he drop Roy with such an unceremonious flop into the tumbled pile of pillows, sheets, and blankets? There he and Tiny sat, rubbing their eyes and grumbling, when mother came in with a tray in her hands. "Wake up, my pet," she said, "I 've brought you such a nice breakfast; and what do you think! spring is really here. I 've been out in the garden, and my bulbs are all showing their little, green heads; and I 'll have to clear all the old leaves away to-day."

"Why, mother, that was just the news I had to tell you. The fairies were helping them through this morning early; I saw them at work."—"Why, my darling, you 've been dreaming. I begin to think it 's always fairy-land in your dreams."—Roy sighed, "Ah! mother," he said, "that 's what the Prince said you would say. It 's no use trying to make grown-ups, even mothers, understand; they can't. They 've lost their second sight that sees into fairy-land. That 's what Prince Fay

told me once."—"Well, darling, I suppose Prince Fay is right, and it may be because we have too many other nearer, dearer, and more important things, such as little boys for instance, to look at and care for."

THE FLOWER BABIES

CHAPTER XIV

THE FLOWER BABIES

THE days passed quickly and happily for Roy when he really began to regain his strength. At first he lay on a long, lounging chair on the piazza, and it was a source of constant delight to watch the birds and insects that came each day in greater numbers, as the sunshine warmed and beautified all nature. Then he was well enough to walk about the garden a little, and sometimes he lay at full length on the grass, looking up at the green boughs overhead, and watching the flash of many-coloured wings, or the flying leaps of bright-eyed, alert, little squirrels.

Tiny was ever at his side, especially when squirrels were to be watched, and every nerve and muscle of the little, black body would thrill and quiver in harmony with the

movements of the furry things she so ardently longed to catch.

Sweet spring breezes, golden sunshine, and the fragrance of budding nature brought back the colour of health to Roy's wan cheeks, the laughter and sparkle to his eyes, and the joyous effervescent spirits that made him sing and whistle as naturally as the birds. Then he loved those quiet, spring evenings. He had to go quite early to bed, but mother would sit beside him, and they would watch the stars come out and listen to the peeping of the frogs; and then she would light a shaded lamp and read him to sleep. Was there anything more soothing than the sound of mother's voice, with the distant frog songs as an orchestral accompaniment, and the drowsy feeling of healthy, contented sleep, making things vague and dreamy?

Yes, those were happy days, and through them all ran a note of expectancy. Any hour the message might come calling him for another glance into fairy-land; and he knew that his eyes were all ready to see his little

friends, because he had been patient and willingly obedient to mother's every word; and though book lessons had not begun again, he was learning well those lessons that could make him "mother's little comfort."

Early waking was the rule with Roy, and of course with Tiny too; and never a morning came to smile its sunny greeting to him but what his bright eyes sought the golden stork, to see if that solemn bird were preparing to stretch his wings and hop out of the Japanese screen. But his looking was never rewarded, for his stork-ship semed to be absolutely oblivious to his existence, and never even deigned to wink at him in return.

One evening Roy had received his orders for bed. Mother was out, and papa had romped with him a little over the allotted time; so he was more or less in a hurry as he ran out on to the piazza to call Tiny. Peering out into the deepening dusk, he saw his doggy sitting up under the big chestnut tree, all absorbed attention. Above her, far out of reach, was a squirrel. Every time the little creature

chattered or scolded, Tiny trembled and whined with excitement; and she obeyed Roy's call to bed most reluctantly after it had been repeated many times.

A dejected, down-spirited, slinking, little doggy she appeared, when she came crawling to her little master's feet at last. "Tiny! Tiny!" he said, "I 'm surprised at you. Don't you know that mother says to be any good, obedience should be prompt, glad, and complete." Whatever Tiny's obedience lacked, her humble sorrow was very evident under reproof. She lay down and licked her little master's shoes; then rolled over and covered her eyes with her paws, a trick she had of acting ashamed.

When thus entreated, Roy gladly forgave her; and he was hurrying to the house with his dog in his arms, when something brushed against his cheek. It was evidently a moth attracted by the electric light in the house. As he mounted the steps, it passed before him onto the piazza and alighted on the back of one of the rustic wood chairs. Roy, always a

lover of the insect world, hurried up to see what species of moth it was; and then caught his breath with an exclamation of delight.

Upon the outstretched wings sat a tiny fairy, smaller than the Princes of his acquaintance, and evidently but a boy in years. He was clad in white cloth, ornamented with silver braid; and it was easy to guess that he was the little page of some fairy household. As Roy stretched out his hand, the little fairy bounded from the moth and landed on one little, pink finger.

He removed his cap with a bow of respect, and spoke in a voice so small that had it not been clear, the words would have been lost on the night breeze: "I bring to you a message, if you are the friend of Prince Fay," he said. "I am," Roy answered. "Her Majesty," continued the messenger, "has graciously consented for you to be present when the cradles are opened. You must be out in the garden a few moments before sunrise to-morrow, but leave your little dog in bed. This time you will not need the aid of the dream fairies.

You shall see with waking eyes, so don't oversleep." Before he could answer, Roy saw the great, soft-winged moth sweep past his hand, and the little figure was gone.

"Roy! Roy!" came his father's voice, "why are you dawdling? Don't you know 'early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise'?"—"All right, papa, I 'm going right up. You can be sure of one thing," he added, "I won't dawdle tomorrow morning; I 'll be 'early to rise.'"

It was, perhaps, the joy of his coming experience that made him drop to sleep the moment his head touched the pillow; or was it that his friend, the Dream Queen, all unseen, stole in on a moonbeam and kissed his eyelids, so that they just had to stay shut? I wonder if the same, kind fairy tapped gently on those little eyelids just fifteen minutes before sunrise; or was it the far-away sound of fairy bugles that roused our little boy just at the right hour?

The moment he opened his eyes, he was wide awake and out of bed. Tiny was still very

sleepy; perhaps dreaming of delightful, red squirrels, always down on the ground and within easy reach. Anyway she made no demur at being tucked up and left to her slumbers. Very quietly and quickly, Roy dressed and tiptoed down the stairs. The unlocking and unbarring of the front door was soon accomplished, and then he stood out in the fresh, early, morning air.

Oh! it was glorious. Every breath was like drinking in the elixir of life, and the stillness from the noise of a work-a-day world made the minstrelsy of the birds the only sound that broke the hushed expectancy of nature. There seemed to be a pause, a waiting and watching. In breeze and tree, in every leaf and blade, you felt and saw it. They were waiting and holding their breath, as it were, for the coming of the King.

Away in the east already the dawn was painting yellow streaks and pink flushes on sky and cloud; and Roy, who knew that the rising of the sun was to be the fairy signal, hastened to ensconce himself in a big, rustic

chair close to the yellow tulip bed. Now his eyes and ears must be very alert to see and hear the little people. Had they already arrived, or were they coming in full force with the first ray of sunlight?

He turned first to the largest bed on his right. No moving figures or bright colours there. Then to the pink tulip bed at his left hand, but there was nothing out of the common. A little farther off was a crescent filled with red tulips. The buds looked very bright. They seemed almost to have caught the crimson of the clouds, but no sign of life appeared. Roy sighed. Waiting is not amusing work for little boys; and though Roy was unusually patient for his age, he wanted something to happen and to happen quickly.

Just then he felt a little prick on the back of his neck. Up went his hand to slap away the mosquito. Surely it was early for them to be at their tricks, but it could not be anything else. His searching hand felt nothing, but his ear caught the sound of a little laugh, silvery and merry, a laugh such as he had

never heard save from the lips of his Prince Fay. Turning sharply, he caught the glint of a fairy sword that was evidently going to try the trick again, but was quickly sheathed when the fairy princeling saw he had been discovered.

Yes, there he was, complacently seated on the back of the chair, his green velvet cloak jauntily thrown back over one shoulder, the humming-bird feather and the ruby which held it in place seeming to gleam with a fiery beauty born of the coming sunrise. "Well, little boy," he cried, "what is the matter with your eyes to-day? You have been looking for fairies, and never saw one until I pricked you into noticing me."—"Oh! I am so, so glad to see you, dear Prince Fay; but surely you and I are not going to watch the cradles open alone, are we?"

Again came the ringing laugh. "I should think not," said the Prince. "Why, the fairies are here, there, and everywhere; don't you see them? It could most literally be said, 'the woods are full of them.'"—"O Fay, Fay!

don't tease so; just help me to see," said poor Roy with a quiver in his voice. In a moment the fairy became all seriousness. "Yes, I will, Roy," he said; "now look over at the yellow tulip bed; what do you see?"—"Green stems and yellow buds, and nothing else."—"Look again; the lords and ladies in waiting are all in green; not a green like mine, but a pale, spring green, and they are very still, each one waiting for the signal."

Yes, there they were; now Roy saw them,—graceful, little figures clad in every tint and shade of the palest green, each one carrying a long wand of the same colour. From bed to bed, Roy's eyes roamed quickly, and everywhere stood, waiting and watching, the little green-clad lords and ladies of the fairy Queen's household.

The sky was growing red, as if a fire burned over in the far-away city on the horizon. The sound of swift wings beat the air. Roy glanced back quickly from the glorious sky to the green lawn. Bluebirds, blue-jays, robins, tanagers, and thrushes were disappearing into

WITHIN·EACH·FLOWER
WAS·THE·TINIEST·BABY

the trees and brush-wood; but the riders who had guided them were there in a splendid group, gathered around a central figure clad in dazzling golden armour, so bright that at first Roy thought his eyes were dazed by the rising sun.

Prince Featherweight, Prince Russet, the Passion Flower Prince, and the Princess Firelight were there, and many, many others with whom Roy had had no former acquaintance, dressed in every hue of the rainbow, glittering with gems, and, above all, so airy and graceful that it was a joy to watch them. Only a moment they stood expectant, and then the knight of the golden armour raised a bugle to his lips. Clear, sweet, and long rang out the notes of the reveille, just as the sun, like a ball of fire, leapt up in the east.

At the sound of the bugle, every waiting fairy raised a wand and touched lightly a tulip bud. Slowly the petals—red, yellow, pink, and white—unfolded in bed after bed; and Roy, who had hurried closer, saw within each flower cup the tiniest, sweetest, pinkest baby

that mortal could imagine. They were stretching their arms and rubbing their eyes, and acting very much as little child babies do when they wake happy and contented after a sweet night's sleep; and they might well be contented, these fairy babies, for the air was full of yellow sunshine, birds' songs, and a fragrance of their own, sweet cradles.

Now every, little, green fairy caught up one wee babe, and with the princes and princesses looking on, they vanished, so swiftly that Roy was bewildered at their flight. True, he never saw so many swallows, swifts, and martins sweep over the lawn at once. Perhaps they were the fairy horses that carried away the wondering babies to the shade of the green woods. Then back came the larger birds, and with plumes waving and merry laughter, the brilliant group of watching fairies followed their friends, and even Prince Fay was gone before Roy had had time to voice one of the many questions that rushed to his lips, which the amazing swiftness of the pageant had for the moment silenced.

It was very disappointing when mother came into the garden, just before breakfast, to hear her say, " The beautiful, warm night and bright, morning sunshine have done their work well, and opened up all my tulips." If only Roy could tell her and make her understand it all as he did.

After breakfast a very sleepy, little dog crawled out of bed and came to seek her master in the garden. Into Tiny's soft, silky ear Roy poured the wondrous story, and it received the keenest attention. He was rejoiced afterwards to see the intelligent little doggy sniffing around the tulip beds with absorbed interest, to find fairy foot-prints, Roy, assured himself; but if the truth were known, I fear it was squirrel tracks she was after; perhaps in memory of some fairy dream of her own, in which the chief actors wore fur and had long, bushy tails.

ROY STARTS FOR FAIRYLAND

CHAPTER XV

ROY STARTS FOR FAIRY-LAND

JUNE had come, beautiful, sunny June; sweet with the scent of a myriad flowers; glad with the thrill of bird love notes, and vibrant with the buzz of bees. The crimson rambler had flung out long, trailing wreaths of gorgeous red, that arched over the doorway and stretched out long arms on either side of the piazza. It was a glorious frame of roses for the distant view. The fragrance of honeysuckle proved a magnet to both bee and butterfly, and now and then a little ruby-throated humming-bird was seen for a moment poised in air, thrusting a quick, sharp bill into the blossoms only to vanish again like a flash the next moment.

Roy was sitting at a table on the piazza, upon which were piled books, papers, pencils,

ink, and all the necessary implements and accompaniments of education. Miss Sloane occupied the opposite chair, and her voice, urgent and monotonous, did not, to Roy's thinking, blend well with the sounds of nature calling so loudly to his eager ears.

Our little boy was well again. Lessons had been resumed, but because fresh air was considered very necessary to renewed vigour and vitality, even his studies were to be pursued as much as possible away from the schoolroom. Roy was earnestly trying to give his mind to his work, and had shown, up to this particular day and hour, a most docile and patient disposition; and even Miss Sloane had had to admit that he was a very good little pupil; but this was such a lovely day. Surely the air had never been sweeter. The sunshine seemed literally made of dancing, golden particles, and the music of bird and bee was all attune to his singing heart.

"I beg your pardon, Miss Sloane, I don't think I understand that rule; I cannot get it into my head. I know you have read it twice,

and I have tried to understand it clearly, but I simply cannot; and as for these figures, they are like so many ugly, little, black enemies. They seem to change and jump about just to muddle and perplex me."

At that point Tiny gave a spring, intending to catch an offending fly that had for some time been teasing her, but she only succeeded in startling Miss Sloane, and rolling her own fat, little body over onto the flower-bed that bordered the piazza. "Really, my dear Roy, that dog must not be present at lesson time. Her movements are so sudden and startling, they quite upset my nerves. What did you say about the rule? Well, I will read it again. Please pay better attention."

It was during the re-reading of the rule for the third time that Roy noted the peculiar actions of a ruby-throated humming-bird. The honeysuckle was on the other side of the piazza, and only a mantle of purple clematis Jackmanni brightened the side where Roy was seated. Why should a humming-bird come repeatedly to a flower that had no special

sweetness to attract it; and why should it hover so near Roy, despite the sound of human voices and the movements that might justly frighten that timid, little bunch of burnished feathers?

All at once Roy's heart gave a bound, and the exclamation, "Oh, joy!" burst unbidden from his lips. "I am glad you see the point," said Miss Sloane with a smile; but Roy was not thinking of the rule, and his sparkling eyes and smiling lips had nothing to do with the solving of arithmetical problems or the clearing of muddled thoughts. He was looking past Miss Sloane. She fondly believed his mind had grasped and overcome his difficulty, but in truth his eyes were looking straight into the face of his merry friend.

Prince Fay had dismounted, sent his humming-bird off, and was sitting on a big, purple flower in a most comfortable attitude. He nodded and smiled most cordially, but spoke no word. In fact he put his finger to his lips as a sign to Roy to keep silence. Just at that moment, fortunately for our little boy, the

preparation bell for lunch rang out insistently, and Miss Sloane was not made aware of his wandering attention. She hastened in to wash her hands, and to do sundry other things that needed much help from the mirror; and Roy had the coveted moment to interview his fairy friend.

"Prince Fay," he said earnestly, "I am so glad you have come. Next week we are going to the seashore, and I thought perhaps I should not get to see you again, and you promised I should go to the woods some day and see real fairy-land, where you dance in the moonlight, and where your Queen, of whom you speak so often, holds court."—"My dear little boy, that 's just what I 've come about. To-night, when the twilight swallows up the glow of sunset, the Princess Firelight is to be married to her gallant knight of the passion flower, and all fairy-land will be there. I do not think my plea alone would have persuaded the Queen to grant you an invitation, but the sweet bride herself asked the favour; and I have brought with me your passport."

So saying, the Prince slipped from around his waist a tiny ring. It looked very small to Roy, but was a very loose and awkward girdle for the Prince. It was of very fine gold, and proved the setting for a moonstone of wondrous beauty. Roy was about to slip it over the tip of his little finger, when Fay stopped him. "If you do that, my little friend, Tiny will probably swallow you, under the impression that you are a new kind of fly; why, you will shrink to fairy size so quickly that you will hardly be able to find yourself. Put it in your pocket; that's right. Now listen carefully to my instructions. Come out onto the piazza and watch the sunset this evening. The moment the great ball of fire disappears behind the hill, enter the wood at the back of the house, go to the spot where you dug up the ferns last year for your mother's rockery. Wait there for the messenger we shall send. When he arrives, slip the ring on your finger and mount. The ride will be long, but very swift, and you will not be away from home long enough to trouble your

mother. Farewell till we meet in fairy-land."

A whir of tiny wings, a flash of green and crimson, and he was gone; but as Roy hurried in to lunch, he slipped his hand into his pocket. To assure himself that he was not dreaming, he touched again the magic, fairy ring. How the rest of that day passed, Roy would find it difficult to remember. He was too excited to sit still; too happy to keep quiet, and too anxious to be able to settle down to either play or work. Miss Sloane let him off from his afternoon lessons, as his flushed face and evident inability to fix his mind on anything made her afraid that he was feverish, and might be developing another illness.

How slowly the sun seemed to travel that afternoon! It appeared to have determined to stand still; and Roy even imagined it might have gone on strike and refused to go to bed at all. Perhaps it wished to smile a golden blessing on the happy pair. At last, to kill time, Roy decided to give Tiny a bath. It would serve two purposes, he felt,—one the occupying of his own attention, and the other

in giving a good excuse for wrapping Tiny up and putting her to bed, which would most effectually keep that faithful, little shadow from following him into the woods; and Tiny, you see, had no invitation, so it would not have been proper for her to go.

While Roy was engaged in soaping and scrubbing a pitiful, trembling, little black body, his mother came in. "My darling," she said, "we are going to have afternoon tea early, and there will be some chicken sandwiches for you. Your papa and I have to go to dine in the city to-night, and you can spend a long evening in the garden, and then have something to eat just before you go to bed, if you wish." "Oh! that 's fine, mother," exclaimed Roy jubilantly; and mother went away wondering why it was fine, because generally there was an outcry against her being away at bedtime, or a very earnest plea to go too, whenever a visit to the city was spoken of.

So it happened that tea was all over; mother and father away, and Tiny safely tucked up

in her own little bed; when Roy, sitting on the piazza steps, saw the clouds flush rosy at the first sign of the approaching sunset. As the house faced the rising of the sun, he had to go half down the long stretch of lawn and take up his watch in a little arbour festooned with pink roses, where he could look back at the forest-clad ridge of hilltop behind the house.

Slowly, but surely, the golden ball sank down behind the trees, flinging up flaming banners saffron, amber, and rose as a last flaunting defiance to the pale, still Queen of Night, already visible in a pale green sky, coming to reign in the stead of the departing King of Day. The lights and colours were so beautiful that Roy, always a lover of nature and artistic by temperament, sat wrapped in admiring forgetfulness. Even his appointment in the woods was forgotten in the pageant of the rosy clouds and transfigured sky.

The sun had vanished behind the hill a full two minutes before he realised it and sprang to his feet. Just as fast as his active, little

legs could carry him, he flew from the garden and took the forest path mentioned by Prince Fay. It was deep twilight there already, for the tall trees, with their overhanging, interlacing branches, shut out all view of the sky, now suffused by the primrose tints of the after-glow. Faster and faster flew Roy's eager feet, and yet the mossy path never seemed so long or steep to him.

At last he reached the spot, under an old oak tree, where great masses of fern grew from between grey lichen-covered rocks and gently tried to cover their ruggedness with a lacework of tender green fronds. Roy threw himself down panting, pillowed his head on a bank of soft moss, and listened to the thud, thud, thud of his heart-beats. When this sound had become slow and subdued, and he could breathe freely, he looked anxiously around for his promised guide.

The forest was very still, and gaze as he would into every nook and corner in sight, no fairy messenger could be seen. "Well, he 's late, whoever he is. That 's all there is to it,"

exclaimed Roy with some petulance; "and if I get there when it 's all over, it will be somebody's fault." "Ha, ha! Ha, ha!" came a discordant voice from the green branches over his head. It was not fairy laughter by any means, and the harsh, hollow mirth wakened mournful echoes in the quiet wood.

Roy felt a chill of fear, which was deepened as a dark, soft something cast a shadow over him, and even swept his face as it whirled past him in silent, ghostly flight. Roy shut his eyes tight, and before his mind rose wild fancies, with goblins, ghosts, vampires, and vultures mixed in a ghastly and somewhat incongruous array. The next minute he heard a voice close beside him, talking in quite a natural tone. "Late, indeed," it said, "I 'd like to know who 's late. Why, I 've been waiting so long, I fairly fell asleep; and you, little boy, were at least two minutes behind your time."

The tone in which these remarks were uttered reassured him. This "vampire" could not be going to pounce on him right away.

Besides, whoever the speaker was, he must be a person the fairies had trusted with the secret of his coming. Having comforted and reassured himself with this line of argument, Roy opened one eye, and after it the other, very wide, in sheer wonder. There, on a rock beside him, sat a great, white owl, with wonderful, shining eyes, one of which it kept winking at Roy in the most rakish fashion.

"Come, little Master Shut-your-eyes-tight; it 's time we were off. I am your messenger and steed as well, and you would better hop up quickly, as I can't sit here for you to catch all your scattered thoughts and collect them into some shape again." "All right," said Roy, rising, "but my dear Mr. Owl, I 'm afraid I shall squash you if I sit down between those lovely, white shoulders of yours." "Well, well, well!" commented his owl-ship, rolling up his eyes in well-feigned horror and surprise, "you must have scattered your thoughts pretty well all along the path coming here. Let me pick up at least one and return it to you." In the funniest way imaginable, he grasped at the air

THERE · SAT · A · GREAT
WHITE · OWL

with one yellow claw, and threw a handful of nothingness at Roy.

Strange to say, immediately a thought sprang to his brain,—the ring! That was what he had forgotten. It took but a moment to snatch it from his pocket and slip it over the tip of his little finger, and then in an instant the owl towered above him like a giant, and the fern fronds were as the branches of forest trees; while the grey rocks looked like massive, rocky mountains.

WEDDING
BELLS

CHAPTER XVI

WEDDING BELLS

WHAT a glorious ride that was! Roy felt as if he were seated on a throne of soft, white down. The great, sweeping wings were almost silent in their motion, and yet he could gauge the swiftness of their progress by the flying, twilight shades of the forest. Trees, rocks, hills, valleys, streams, and little still pools of inky black water, with here and there a star-gleam breaking the surface, or a pale, pointing finger of moonlight shining through the deep foliage; all these things Roy saw one moment, only to lose them the next.

On, on, on! He felt almost sleepy as the soft, warm air fanned his cheek, and the hum of night insects sang the sweet lullaby of nature. Then, with a downward sweep, the great bird landed, and Roy slipped off his back onto

a soft tuft of moss. "Good-bye for the present," the white owl whispered, and vanished with a soft whir of wings, and Roy was left alone in the forest. No feeling of fear or loneliness came to trouble him now, for somehow he felt that his little friends were very near to him, and he was not wrong in his surmise.

When his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw the outline of a high, dense thicket just in front of him; and even as he looked, a long, double row of lights shone out, disclosing a little path cut through the very centre of it. He at once entered the path, and noted to his surprise that the lights were glow-worms tethered to their places by silken cords. Overhead, where the thicket closed like the roof of a tunnel, fire-flies were poised, also held from flight by silken, gossamer threads.

As Roy advanced, the path became very winding, and looking back he saw that the lights went out and the walls closed in behind him. Now the night sounds were suddenly hushed, as if some silent command had gone

forth to all the insect minstrels; and a moment later, clear, sweet, and silvery, rang out the notes of a fairy horn. Once, twice, three times, it sounded; and then the whole air was vibrant with the pealing of bells. Clearly and sweetly, with silvery cadence, they rang and jangled, sounding the whole scale of the chimes,—first slow, and like liquid drops of moonlight; then like a running stream, and then blending and clashing in a glad revelry of sound.

Running at the top of his speed—and somehow his tiny feet seemed winged to-night—Roy pressed through the thicket and stood dazed and bewildered in fairy-land at last. He had entered the side door of a large and imposing palace, built apparently of the most exquisite, white onyx, translucent save where the agate lines of rose and salmon colour shone through it. A splendid dome covered the great, central hall, while around three sides ran corridors like the old cloisters of a cathedral, the vaulted roofs of which were supported by slender, onyx pillars.

Right beside the main entrance, and occupying the whole back of the great hall, ran a flight of steps leading to a great, golden throne. Crimson velvet partly covered them, but at the sides it could be seen that they also were of the precious metal. The floor of the hall looked like a hard, polished mirror, and reflected back the brilliance of the thousands upon thousands of electric lights that illuminated the whole palace.

Looking for these lights, Roy discovered that nowhere could any glass globes be seen, but that the glow came from the hearts of flowers, with which the whole palace was most lavishly decorated. Here a tall background of white Madonna lilies, glowing with light; there wreaths of pale pink roses, diffusing delicate colour; and yet farther on, a golden glory bursting from masses of yellow orchids. Fountains played in the corridors, cooling the air and adding to the pealing bells the undertone of tinkling waters.

Again the shrill bugle-call! The golden doors flew back, and such a pageant entered

as made Roy hold his breath in wonder. First came rank after rank of green-clad fairies, the knights dressed in velvet, the ladies in finest silk and gossamer. Emeralds glittered in their draperies and crowned their golden hair. Next came a great company in pale blue, jewelled with sapphires and turquoise. Again, rank upon rank in richest crimson wearing rubies; and after them tripped airy little creatures whose garments were soft as pink rose petals, and whose curly locks were crowned with pink coral.

The fairies in yellow might well have had their clothing woven from the sunbeams, and the topazes they wore might have been fire imprisoned in crystal, so did they gleam. The company, whose purple velvet was soft as the cheek of a pansy, wore amethysts, and the gossamer gowns of their ladies might have been gathered from the shadows and mists on the distant hills of a summer night.

When all these companies had formed themselves in the great hall, it looked to Roy as if a piece of the rainbow had been caught and

imprisoned in the palace. Now the clanging and pealing of bells ceased, and sweet music filled the air. A long aisle was left down the centre of the hall, and up it passed a queenly figure, followed by a troop of princes and princesses clad in cloth of gold. Her dress was of shining whiteness, and a royal mantle of crimson velvet trimmed with ermine fell from her shoulders. A diamond crown glittered upon her head, and the same costly gems gleamed and scintillated around her neck and from the folds of her robe.

When she was seated, with her princesses around her, the bugle sounded again; and the gallant figure of the Prince of the Passion Flower, the bridegroom, who had once been the white knight of the snow-storm, came gaily up the aisle, attended by knights dressed in cloth of silver, with the purple mantles of their leader's flower flaunting jauntily from their shoulders.

A moment later, as the sounds of the wedding march filled the air, the sweet bride followed slowly, accompanied by a bevy of

THE·QUEEN·TOUCHED·THE RING·WITH·HER·SCEPTRE AND·UNITED·THEIR·HANDS

white-clad fairies. She, herself, was in the pure, bridal white of her birth flower, and her only adornments were pearls. They crowned her hair, fell in a rich rope around her waist, and even bordered the hem of her trailing robes.

"O, for a dozen eyes!" thought Roy, as he watched, for there was so much to see; and yet he was almost too dazzled to be able to take it all in at once.

The marriage ceremony took place on the steps of the throne, the Queen herself asking the questions of bride and groom, touching the ring with her sceptre, and uniting their hands, amid the cheers of the assembled throng. Then she told of the deeds of her brave knight, and of the true love of his fair lady, and wished them lives full of usefulness, gladness, and sunshine.

After that, amid music, laughter, and song, the whole company glided out into the forest; and Roy, who followed, saw that the moonlight shone bright on a great, green space, which was in fact the fairy ballroom. O, how they

danced and danced! How sweet was the music! How light the fall of their fairy feet! It was then that Prince Fay, all resplendent in cloth of gold, sought out his little friend, and led him up to the fairy Queen.

Her smiling eyes were full of kindly greeting, and the hand she laid on his shoulder was soft as the fall of a rose petal. "Dear little boy," she said, "I am glad to welcome you, because you have come the right way to fairy-land, and my princes have told me that you have a loving, tender, gentle heart. I know that you love the flowers and the birds, the butterflies and all the lovely things of nature. If you did not, you could never find a fairy, and the secrets of our world would be a sealed book to you. When you grow to manhood and lose your child eyes, and have to look at life through the eyes of knowledge and experience, you will still love the fairy-land of nature, and you will be a nobler, purer, truer man because of it." And then she stooped and kissed him, and he dropped on one knee and kissed her hand with as much chivalry as any of her

knights or princes would have shown; and then Prince Fay led him away.

Down the fire-fly lighted path they walked together, and out into the dark forest, where the insects were droning and shrilling in slumbrous harmony. Sitting solemnly asleep, they found the big, fluffy, white owl, who had to be awakened by a prick from Prince Fay's sword, but laughed and hooted at the idea that he was napping when they charged him with the offence. With a farewell to the fairy friend, and a quick spring to his steed's broad back, Roy was off and away, homeward bound, through moonlight and shadow, with a silent swiftness that was weird and thrilling.

It seemed only a few moments before he was down again at the foot of the oak tree, and the owl had vanished once more, a moving shadow amid the shadows of the giant trees. It was late for a little boy to be alone in the woods, and he looked down the path with a rather frightened, quickly beating heart. What was that yonder in that patch of moonlight? His heart throbbed and then seemed to stop with

horror, and he felt himself turn cold all over. Right in his path sat a monstrous beast. It was black as night and apparently as big as a house, with eyes that gleamed, and a great, red tongue that showed when it panted, and the panting was like the sound of a locomotive climbing a hill.

Instinctively Roy raised his hand, as if to ward off this terror, and as he did so his eye caught the gleam of the moonstone on his finger. In a moment he had slipped the ring off, and it rolled away into the moss and shadows, while from his own former height he looked again down the path. In the place of the great, frightful beast that had sat barring his way, he saw the alert, little body of his own Tiny, and in a moment the faithful, little creature was at his feet, whining with delight, and yet lying humbly down and looking guilty, as if she feared a scolding would be her welcome; but Roy was far too glad of company to scold, even though he saw suspicious marks on the paws and nose he had washed so carefully, which suggested that the doggy had employed

her waiting time in trying to dig out chipmunks or rooting for buried bones.

Very softly they crept up to bed together, and when mother came home, she found her boy sleeping soundly, with a warm, little, black body held tight in his arms, and such a happy smile was on his lips that she guessed his dreams must have carried him off to fairy-land again.

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